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THE STORY OF DAN

BY

M. C. FRANCIS

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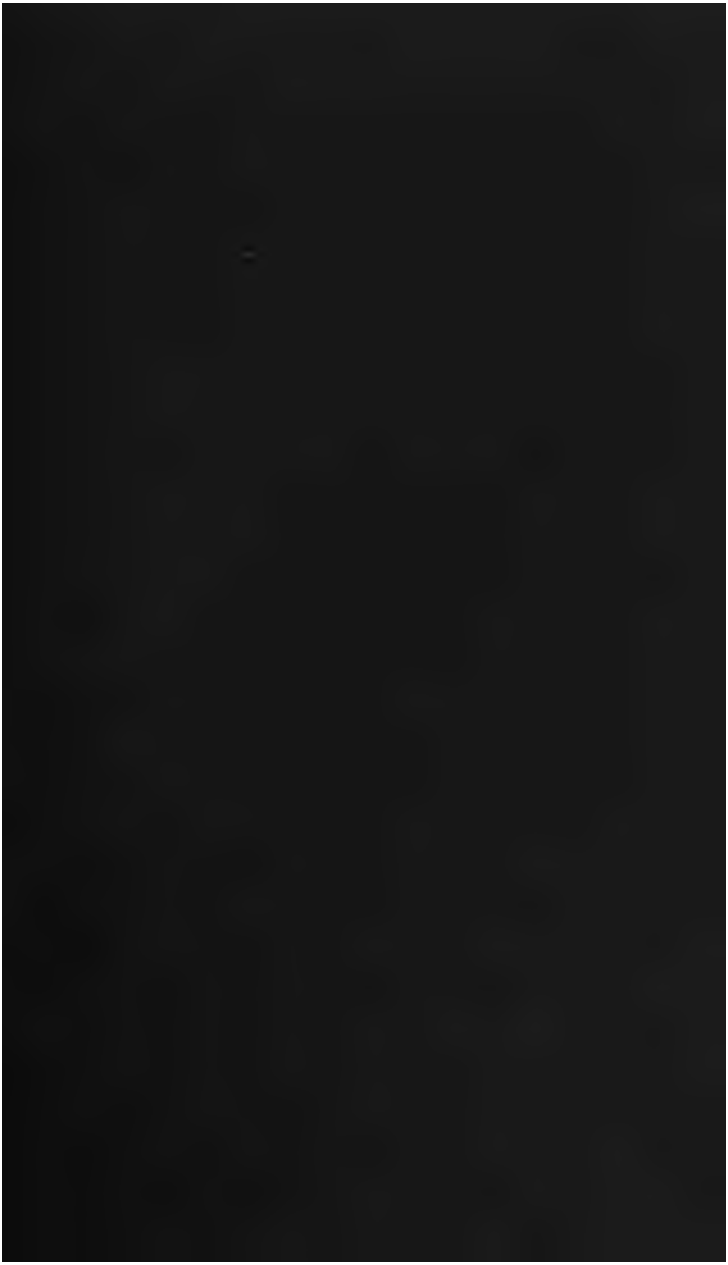
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FROM THE BOOKS
IN THE HOMESTEAD OF
Sarah Orne Jewett
AT SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE



BEQUEATHED BY
Theodore Jewett Eastman
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1931





THE STORY OF DAN

BY

M. E. FRANCIS

AUTHOR OF "IN A NORTH COUNTRY VILLAGE," "WHITHER," ETC.



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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Mothers' Talk	1
II.	Esther	16
III.	"Wherefore if you know of any Impediment"	33
IV.	Dealings with "the Quality"	57
V.	An Esther "glittering in Royal Robes"	77
VI.	Dan puts his Fate to the Test	93
VII.	Moonlighters	112
VIII.	Dan consults another Oracle	125
IX.	Dreams	142
X.	Awakening	162
XI.	In Tribulation	179
XII.	"The Feast of Reason and the Flow of Soul"	194
XIII.	The Crime of an Innocent	218
XIV.	Murder will Out	234
XV.	At Bay	262
XVI.	Two Tribunals	277

THE STORY OF DAN.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHERS' TALK.

"My little boy is a very good little boy," said Mrs. Drennan, "as long as he does n't go marryin' on me."

The very notion of such a contingency communicated a tremulous motion to the wide frilling of her big white cap, and a sudden accession of color to her already ruddy face.

"An' why would he do that?" returned her sympathetic neighbor, Mrs. Green. "Sure it 's too well off he is now, wid a beautiful stone house to live in, and on'y himself and you in it, not to mintion the comforth ye keep him in."

Mrs. Drennan looked modestly round at

the mansion alluded to, which was about six yards away from the stile beside which she and her friend were conversing. It was a two-roomed cottage solidly built, and recently thatched, with a little monthly rose-tree clambering over the stone wall beside the doorway, and an attempt at a garden in front, where a few stocks and the remains of some mignonette bloomed amid the cabbages and potatoes. A cheerful flicker of firelight gleamed through the open doorway, and Mrs. Drennan's thoughts dwelt with some complacency on the order and cosiness within. A hot griddle-cake was, she knew, at that very moment browning on the hearthstone, the earthen floor was swept as clean as clean could be, the plates and tea-cups on the dresser were polished till they shone again, the "forms" or settles were guiltless of even a speck of dust, and no one would guess that the big brown cupboard in the corner was the "turn-up" bedstead in which her "little boy" reposed after the labors of the day. Mrs. Drennan was a thrifty woman,

and she felt that her friend's eulogy was well deserved.

"Well, it 's only the thruth to say that I do all I can for him, and he desarves it too, for there never was a betther son. Lookit here, Mrs. Green, ivery shillin' that lad earns he brings home to me. I says to him wanst, says I, 'Dan,' says I, 'sure ye need n't give me all,' says I, 'keep some of it for yourself,' says I, 'as the other boys do about.' An' he up an' he says to me, he says, '*No*, mother,' he says, 'I 'll *niver* do that,' he says. 'Me father ga' me the example of bringin' home his earnin's to you,' he says, 'an' sure the money could n't be in betther hands.' Ah, he said that, God bless him, an' indeed his poor father — God be merciful to him" —

"Ah, thrue for ye, Mrs. Drennan!" interrupted Mrs. Green somewhat hastily, for she knew that, once started on this subject, her neighbor's eloquence was a trifle overpowering, and, her curiosity on the subject of the good little boy's "goin's on" being fairly aroused, she had listened to the enum-

eration of his perfections with some impatience.

"Me husband — God be merciful to him," — resumed Mrs. Drennan, in a rather higher key, so as to drown any attempted interruption, "gev him the example, an' a carefuller nor a betther man niver stepped. Whin he 'd come home from Mass on a Sunday, I assure ye he 'd take off his good clothes, ivery wan of them, shirt an' all he would," pausing after this somewhat remarkable assertion to wipe her eyes on her apron, and to indulge in a loud sniff, but hastening to pursue her discourse lest her friend might take an unfair advantage of such emotion. "An' he 'd fould them up, an' brush them, an' put them in the dhrawer, an' put on his ould clothes agin, for fear, he 'd say, that they 'd be gettin' wore out before himself."

"Och thin, we know he was a saint intirely," put in Mrs. Green with a sympathetic sniff, and a back-handed wipe of *her* eyes as a tribute to the dear departed. "Sure we 'll niver see his likes agin, niver!

But what call have ye to be talkin' about Dan getting marrid! Troth, it 's no notion he has o' that at all. We all know that," she added cunningly, " sure Dan 's the very cut of a bachelor — the very cut o' wan, so he is!"

Mrs. Drennan jerked her apron down again suddenly, and stopped the rocking to and fro with which she had been soothing the grief evoked by the affecting memory aforesaid.

"Heth, an' he is *not!*" she returned with gathering ire at what she deemed a slur on her boy. " The girls does n't think so anyhow," — with intense meaning, — " may be if ye was to ax some o' them, ye 'd hear different to that."

" Oh thin, may be I would," assented the other, whose curiosity induced her to overlook her friend's resentment. " I 'm no talker as is well beknown, an' it 's always me that 's the last to hear annythin'. An' who 'ud I be axin'? I 'm sure there 'd not be a ha'p'orth of good in axin' Mary Brady" —

"*Mary Brady!*" interrupted Mrs. Drennan, "Mary Brady indeed!"

"Sure that's what I'm sayin' — Dan would n't even *look* at her. As for Judy up beyant there — she 's a stale girl, so she is — I 'm thinkin' it would n't be her ayther."

"I 'm not sayin' it 's annybody," broke in Mrs. Drennan with sudden warmth, "but I 'm sayin' there 's manny a wan, manny an' manny a wan, that 'ud jump at Dan, ay, just *jump* at him, an' that know how to let him know they would too, Mrs. Green, for all he 's the *cut* of a bachelor," — this with withering sarcasm; "I tell ye what — he has no more the looks of a bachelor than ye have yerself — *now!*"

Mrs. Green, the portly mother of many children, felt the irony of this remark so acutely that angry words would doubtless have ensued, had not the discussion been brought to a close by the sudden appearance of Dan himself. The two ladies had been so enthralled by their conversation that they had not noticed his approach till he was within a few yards of them.

Not much to look at after all, for such a hero. About middle height, with a sunburnt, beardless face, unusually boyish for his twenty-four years; dark hair, irregular features, — a face in fact only redeemed from the absolutely commonplace by the expression of the eyes. These were of the brilliant, black-fringed blue so often seen in Ireland, and only in their expression did they differ from those of thousands of Dan's country folk. They were as the eyes of a little child; so frank, so trustful, so innocent was their gaze. For the rest he was, outwardly seeming, a typical Irish peasant. Education at the time of which I speak — thirty years ago — was little known in his part of the world, and Dan could not even write his name. He was deeply religious, scrupulously honest, hardworking, even, as the times went, though he did not think himself obliged to doff his coat during his daily labor, and the gait with which he now drew near his home had in it much of the slouch so exasperating to the Saxon.

"Sure here 's himself!" cried Mrs. Drennan, all her irritation forgotten at the sight, and her square wrinkled face wreathed in smiles. "Why, it 's airly ye are this evenin', Dan!"

"I made haste home," returned Dan — "Good-evenin', Mrs. Green; I did n't see it was you wid the sun in me eyes — I made haste home, mother, for they 're goin' to burn the furze up by Hopall, and it 'll be a grand sight, they say. I 'm thinkin' of goin' up there afther a bit."

His mother's face clouded over.

"Hothin, it 'ud be betther for ye to stay quite, wid yer mother, afther yer day's work, than to be goin' off thrampin' over the hills that-away. Sure, ye 've seen the furze burnin' often enough. If ye were left alone, ye would n't be thinkin' o' that."

"Have ye e'er a cup o' tay for me?" put in Dan, adroitly turning the conversation, which evidently threatened to take an unpleasant turn.

"Thin, glory be to God! if I have n't left

the cake on the griddle all this time. It 'll be a cinder as sure as I 'm here, an' caraways in it an' all!" And housewifely intincts being stronger in Mrs. Drennan than even maternal jealousy, she hastened into the cottage with all the speed she could muster. Dan followed her, closing the door after him; and Mrs. Green, still devoured with curiosity, was reluctantly obliged to retire to her own abode, where the pigs and the children were alike clamoring for their supper.

Mr. Green was leaning over the half-door smoking his pipe, and anxiously expecting his spouse.

"Musha where 've ye been this long while?" he asked, somewhat irritably. "The childer 's wild for the want of a bit, and the babby itself is bawlin'!"

"I 've on'y been beyant at Mrs. Drennan's," returned his better half with praiseworthy coolness as she entered, catching up the baby who was yelling itself hoarse on its elder sister's knee; and turning chil-

dren and chickens (who alike surrounded her) summarily out of doors till their evening meal was ready.

"Whisht! me heart's scalded wid yez all. Reach me the pot, Honnie; that's it undher your Da's coat, an' the male 's there wid the tallow candles in the corner. Come here, ye little Turk ye, an' have done wid yer noise."

"They're goin' to burn the furze up at Hopall," remarked Green senior, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and dismissing with a kick or two an inquisitive pig which was about to enter the open door; "I'm goin' up there as soon as I've had a bit o' supper."

"I hard Dan Drennan sayin' just now that he was goin'," replied Mrs. Green. "His mother was mad, so she was. She was talkin' of Dan's gettin' marrid a while ago, an' was goin' to kill me for sayin' he was the cut of a bachelor."

"Hothin sorra bit of a bachelor Dan is!" returned her husband. "It'll not be long

before we 'll be hearin' him called, I 'm thinkin' ! Him an' Esther Daly has been coortin' this long while."

"Esther Daly!" cried Mrs. Green in astonishment. "Esther Daly!" she repeated shrilly. "That bould, impident thing! Sure, Dan 'ud niver look at her, wid her daft brother an' all. Troth, an ye 're out there, Mike!"

"All the same it 's as plain as the nose on me face," retorted Mike; and as that feature was broken, besides being deeply indented with small-pox, the fact in question must have been very plain indeed. "Has n't Esther been workin' in the garden beyant" — jerking his thumb over his shoulder — "all the summer, an' isn't it Dan that 's foreman in it since the Masther turned away Casey? Troth, if Dan 's goin' to get married, it 's to Esther herself, for I seen wid me own two eyes the way she was goin' on wid him."

"Well, may be so," said Mrs. Green meditatively. "His mother did say there was girls that was ready to jump at Dan. But for

a dacent, quiet fella like him to be takin' up wid the likes of her! Well, well, there 's no tellin' what quare things people will be doin'! An' is Esther goin' up to Hopall this evenin'?"

"As I was comin' up the road past their house, I hard her callin' afther him," returned Green, lifting the pot off the fire and unceremoniously helping himself to a large plateful of stirabout. "'Don't be late, Dan,' she says, 'now mind. I 'll be even wid ye if ye are,' she says; so I 'm thinkin' if they 're not sweethearts that looks quare."

"I 've a good mind to go up to Hopall meself an' have a look at them," cried his wife with much animation. "Here childher, come in an' have your suppers. Hurry up, now, Honnie, I 'll be wantin' you to mind the child for me till I come back."

"I 'm goin' up to see the furze burnin', meself," cried Honnie rebelliously, tossing back the shock masses of black hair which hung over her face, and glancing defiantly at her mother. "I 'm tired nursin' him all

day, so I am. Wan o' the others may stop at home wid him now."

"Was there ever such a bould, ungrateful child?" ejaculated Mrs. Green, pausing, spoon in hand, while the younger members of the family fought for the stirabout. "I declare me heart 's broke wid her. Look at her there goin' on ten year ould, her that ought to be a comforth to me now — does she say, as a good daughter ought, 'I 'll rack me head' (with a severe glance at Honnie's unkempt tresses) 'an' mind the child, an' help me mother?' Does she say that? Indeed she does not. Look at her, wid that head which has n't been racked this three days, an' listen to the way she spakes — ye bould lump, ye!" brandishing the spoon threateningly.

"Sure she did n't mean it — did ye, Honnie?" put in the father good-naturedly, "I 'll engage she 'll stop at home as she 's bid, an' mind the child as well as yerself — won't ye now, Honnie?"

Honnie jerked back her shaggy locks

again, and ate her stirabout without vouchsafing any rejoinder.

"Ah thin, may be she will," acquiesced Mrs. Green with a sudden change of tone: "she knows I don't dar' thrust the child wid anny one o'ny herself — she knows that, so she does, an' she 'll stop quite at home an' mind him for me."

"Heth, I won't!" cried Honnie, who had now finished her supper, "I 've minded him long enough, an' I 'm goin' off out o' this now."

And before any one could stop her she sprang out of the cabin, and bounded down the lane like a young antelope.

"Ah, ye little schamer, ye!" shouted Mrs. Green, running to the door, "I 'll be murtherin' ye intirely whin I get a hoult of ye! — She 's gone now," she added philosophically, returning to her half-consumed meal, "so there 's no good talkin' to her. Heth, I b'lieve Johnnie 's awake! May be I 'll take him along wid me."

Accordingly the entire Green family set

off for Hopall, when the greater part of the stirabout had been consumed, and the pot containing the remainder had been set on the doorstep the better to enable the pig to perform the office of scullery-maid.

CHAPTER II.

ESTHER.

A WIDE stretch of furze-covered land, bounded on one side by a noble belt of fir-trees, and open on the other to a view such as is so often to be seen in Ireland. A very ocean of hills, billowing one above the other, and varying in hue from tenderest green near at hand to the lovely violet of the distant ones, whose dusky waves were almost lost in the imperial purple of the evening sky. The sun had not yet disappeared behind them, and like a gracious sovereign of old was scattering largess with a lavish hand before withdrawing. Gold streaked the heavens, glittered in the distant streams, gleamed among the yellowing ears of the hillside cornfields, nay, covered the miserable white-washed cabins that peeped out from amid the hedges with dazzling glory.

Suddenly another glory, ruddier, more earthly, sprang up in attempted rivalry at the very feet of the little crowd which watched for it, and a sheet of flame spread over the furze-covered plateau and crept along the crackling bushes resplendent with a milder glow but a few weeks before.

"Hooray!" cried the little Greens, and a score more of their kind, while their elders standing about in groups discussed more weighty matters, such as the "iligant pasture" that would now be open to Mr. Keogh's sheep, and how "mad" it would make the Master of the Hounds and the Lord (this term had no spiritual significance, but merely referred to the owner of the adjacent property).

Mrs. Green, with "Johnnie" the baby sitting up very bright and perky in her arms, wandered from one to the other, her tongue wagging with inconceivable swiftness, and her eyes roving anxiously around in search of Dan and his beloved. "That 's them, sure enough," she said to herself, as

she caught sight of a couple standing side by side a little apart from the others, and she moved a step or two nearer.

Yes, that was Dan. There was no mistaking the slight, well-made figure, the peculiar shape of the hat which he wore tilted slightly back on his head, and the neat attire. Mrs. Green's eyes were quickly turned away from him, however, that they might rest on his companion. A tall girl with unusual grace of figure; lithe and slim, with her head set proudly on her shoulders, and features clearly-cut, one would say almost statuesque, were it not for the ever-varying expression which flittered across them. Standing thus between the waning glory in the sky, the growing glory at her feet, her beauty was enhanced by the glamor of the scene and hour. A sort of halo shone amid her nut-brown hair, which was twisted up artistically, if untidily enough, round her small head, the ruddy glow increased the color in her cheeks and lit up those wonderful blue-gray eyes of hers

with a witchery of its own. Her shapely feet were bare, and her print sun-bonnet was slung carelessly on her arm, her stuff petticoat was clumsily patched here and there, and her pink cotton jacket ragged and not over clean. But the grace in every movement, the ease of her attitude, the carriage of her head, would have done credit to a duchess: only in Ireland could so many inconsistencies have been moulded into so charming a whole.

Dan, with his honest face bright with unusual excitement, his blue eyes shining with eagerness, was talking in a low voice; the girl every now and then making some laughing rejoinder. Her laugh was another contradiction; delightful to look at, sparkling as it did round eyes and mouth, and bringing the most cunning and unexpected dimples to light, but, if truth be told, neither musical nor refined in sound. Esther's laugh was a sort of crow, loud, shrill, indescribably vulgar in tone; yet in Dan's ears it rang pleasantly as the murmur of the rippling stream.

"Och, the impudent thing!" ejaculated Mrs. Green, after watching her for some time. "I 'd be ashamed to look at her, so I would," — no whit relaxing her eager stare however, — "Dan 's as daft as her brother, I think, to be taking notice of her at all. Bould, an' — an' ontidy, an' dirty — I 'm sure she 's a disgrace to the place," — hitching up her draggled shawl, and giving the flat bonnet which adorned her own ruffled tresses a "chuck" forward. These uncomplimentary remarks, however, did not disturb the lovers, who remained talking and laughing together, — Esther doing most of the former and all of the latter, — heedless of her proximity. They stood there, indeed, until there remained of the sunset but a faint afterglow, of the burning furze but a few blackened, smouldering twigs, till the loiterers had dispersed with many a cheery "good-night," and even the Green family had betaken themselves homewards; and then it was reluctantly enough that Dan proposed to see his sweetheart safe to her own abode.

"Well, it's time to be thinkin' of it," returned Esther; "we've been standin' here long enough, and that smoke's in me throat yet." Upon which she coughed — a cough of the same quality as her laugh.

"It is n't a cold ye've caught, is it?" asked Dan anxiously; "the wind 's a bit sharp now, an' I clean forgot how late it was gettin'."

"Come on now, thin," said Esther, unconcernedly, "sorra bit of cold I have — on'y chokin' wid the smoke, I tell ye."

They turned homewards in silence, and walked slowly down the lane. The air, though growing chill as Dan had said, was full of sweet odors and pleasant sounds; the tall hedges, all the fairer for being badly kept, waved their long graceful branches with a curious little stir and rustle every now and then; a stream that crept through the rank grass on one side of the path chattered to the moss-grown stones which tried to bar its course, a bell fastened round the neck of some wandering goat tinkled in the

distance, and still further off in "the Lord's" park the faint lowing of cattle could be heard. Dan, in all the ecstasy of his young love, walked, as it were, in fairy-land, too happy to speak; but to Esther the silence was a trifle oppressive. She glanced at Dan now and then with feelings of aggravation: here they were, acknowledged sweethearts now — they had talked the matter over pretty freely during the furze-burning — and he seemed to have nothing to say to her. After a little time she determined to give him a hint. Swinging her shapeless bonnet to and fro to mark the cadence, and suffering her dark-fringed eyes to wander absently over the hedgerow, she began to sing, —

> "Say you love me, Molly darling,
> Let your answer be a kiss," etc., etc.

The ditty was familiar enough to Dan, but the meaning of the words struck home to him with a force that almost took his breath away. There is nothing more touching, more admirable, than the chivalry of the

average Irish peasant for women. Though Dan's courtship had been of some months' duration, and though his love for Esther was very ardent, he would no more have thought of taking the smallest liberty with her than he would have set about his daily work without saying his prayers. But now — things were surely changed — she had acknowledged her love, and would shortly be his; might he not venture to be more familiar? The mere possibility set his heart beating violently, while his boyish, ingenuous face was covered with blushes.

Esther, in the meanwhile, sang on with apparent unconcern, glancing slyly at her lover every now and then, and feeling more and more exasperated as they approached her home. Her happy thought had not had the effect of loosing his tongue, and it was too dark for her to distinguish his expression. At last they reached her abode, a tumble-down cabin with a dim light burning in the window, and the door fast closed.

"I 'll say good-night to ye now, Dan,"

said Esther, breaking off suddenly in her song. "Troth it 's the agree'ble man ye are this evenin'! Not a word out o' ye the whole way home. I 'm obliged to ye, I 'm sure, for yer company."

"Esther," returned Dan, tremulously, "I could n't spake because I was thinkin' of somethin'. Esther, you an' me 's to be man an' wife, an' — an' it is but right that we should be plisant and frien'ly together. So" (taking his courage in both hands) "I 'm goin' to ax ye if ye 'll gi' me a kiss, darlin'."

"Are ye now?" cried Esther, with one of her crows of laughter. "The impidence o' that! Well, may be I will — there!" bestowing a sounding salute on his brown cheek. "Now be off out o' that wid ye, for Pether doesn't like to see anny wan sthrange."

Dan, his face bright with rapture, and blushing up to the very roots of his hair, turned without a word and was soon lost to view in the gathering darkness.

Esther stood for a moment looking after him dubiously: —

"Heth, he 's a quare fella!" she remarked to herself, "an' not a bit o' sperrit in him. He 'll be moitherin' me, if he 's goin' to go on that-away."

She was not, however, given to wasting much time in reflection, and soon betook herself to the closed door of the cabin, which, after a vigorous shake or two, opened to her strong brown hand.

The scene within was neither cheerful nor inviting. Though Esther's dwelling was not quite so dirty and untidy as that of Mrs. Green, who between her children and her fowls had long given up any attempt at cleanliness, it formed a strong contrast to the neatness and comfort of Dan's home. The pig was not allowed to enter, but the chickens had often enough a meal off the uneven mud floor; the hearthstone, on which the turf fire still smouldered, had not been whitened for many a day; the one battered candlestick, in which

CHAPTER II.

ESTHER.

A WIDE stretch of furze-covered land, bounded on one side by a noble belt of fir-trees, and open on the other to a view such as is so often to be seen in Ireland. A very ocean of hills, billowing one above the other, and varying in hue from tenderest green near at hand to the lovely violet of the distant ones, whose dusky waves were almost lost in the imperial purple of the evening sky. The sun had not yet disappeared behind them, and like a gracious sovereign of old was scattering largess with a lavish hand before withdrawing. Gold streaked the heavens, glittered in the distant streams, gleamed among the yellowing ears of the hillside cornfields, nay, covered the miserable white-washed cabins that peeped out from amid the hedges with dazzling glory.

"Ah, God help him, it 's starvin' he is," muttered Esther to herself, while she proceeded to minister to his wants. A loaf of bread was produced from a shelf near the fireplace (where it had been reposing in close proximity to the boots which Esther assumed on Sunday), a thick slice cut therefrom, and presented, plentifully smeared with dripping, to the ravenous Peter. She watched him with strange solicitude as he tore and gnawed at it, his likeness to a wild beast being more apparent than ever; smiling at him now and then with a tenderness far exceeding that which she had bestowed on Dan. The best point in the girl's commonplace, undisciplined nature was her strong affection for the deaf and dumb brother who, motherless from his birth, had been all his life wholly dependent on her care. She had undertaken the charge when she was about six years old, and now, though he was eighteen, the burthen had increased instead of lessening, as their father had died in the preceding year, and Esther was in

consequence the sole bread-winner. Peter, wholly incapable of instruction — had there been such to be had — and by his infirmities severed from his fellow-creatures, had come to be regarded by almost every one as a complete idiot. Yet it is difficult to say if he were indeed one; now and then gleams of intelligence were perceptible in him, and had he received the training available under happier circumstances, it is possible that his mental organization might not have proved more defective than those of his neighbors. As it was, though the latter pitied him, and would have been glad to show him any kindness in their power, they rarely dared to go near him, fearing his ungovernable fits of passion and the unreasonable jealousy with which he appeared to regard all who approached his sister. In these outbreaks of temper he seemed to be endowed with supernatural strength, and occasionally did much damage; and Esther, though her influence over him was great, had difficulty in soothing him. It was on this account that

during her daily absences from home she was accustomed to bolt the door lest her big unruly child might break loose and work some mischief to himself or to the neighbors. Her *child* I say, for such indeed was the light in which she had come to regard him; his helplessness and absolute dependence on her having prematurely called forth the hidden fund of devotion that in most women is only brought to light by maternity. And as some utterly uninteresting and commonplace natures are brightened and ennobled by the wondrous strength of the love which they bestow on their offspring, so Esther's motherly tenderness for her brother redeemed much that was otherwise blameworthy in her character. To Dan, whose soft heart had been conquered by her great beauty and fascination, Esther was absolutely perfect, yet in truth there was little in the girl which might not with greater justice have repelled him. She was narrow-minded to the last degree, ignorant, not with the childlike simplicity which in

Dan was so far from contemptible, but with that dense, coarse, arrogant ignorance which is incapable even of the perception of higher things, — added to this, many strong passions absolutely undisciplined, a vulgarity of which the very poorest are often happily devoid, and an overweening vanity. It was characteristic of the girl that once free from the presence of her lover, after her first slightly contemptuous commentary, she gave no further thought to him. He was "well enough," the best that she in her position could expect, and a desirable match on the whole if it were not for that old mother of his. She had seen what he was "afther" for some time, and had weighed the pros and cons of the matter in a sober calculating spirit that would have done credit to any fine young lady. Mrs. Drennan was a drawback certainly, and Dan himself was rather too soft and simple to suit her taste, but he had a snug little place of his own, and was earning good wages, with the prospect of soon rising in the

world. Esther, if she married him, would no longer have to work for her living — being excessively lazy, that was a great consideration — and all the girls in the neighborhood would be wild with jealousy; this turned the scale. Accordingly she had been quite prepared for Dan's proposal, and when, an hour or two ago, with much earnestness and many tremors he had ventured to moot it, she had, after playing with him for some time, till he had grown sufficiently eager and excited to please her, yielded an unqualified consent. Now, however, while he wandered slowly homewards in a perfect delirium of wondering delight, Esther, basking in the warmth of the turf-fire and plying her repulsive-looking brother with food, dismissed Dan completely from her mind.

When Peter had finished his repast, and had further been regaled with a pint or so of buttermilk, his sister proceeded to prepare his sleeping accommodation for the night. The cupboard became a bedstead in a trice, and the bedding was arranged

with an attempt at neatness; then, motioning to Peter that it was time for him to retire, she herself withdrew to the inner room, and the inmates of the cabin were asleep and snoring long before Dan, leaning against the stile a yard or two from his own home, had made up his mind to enter and face his mother.

CHAPTER III.

"WHEREFORE IF YOU KNOW OF ANY IMPEDIMENT."

DAN looked sheepish enough when he at last lifted the latch and found himself in the presence of Mrs. Drennan. From hints which the latter had occasionally let drop he was pretty sure his tidings would be unwelcome, and was now somewhat at a loss how to introduce the subject.

His mother, however, was the first to advert to it, breaking the ice very efficiently by inquiring "what call he had to be dawdlin' about till that time o' night wid a girl he had no right to be talkin' to at all."

Dan flushed deeply, but was bent on propitiation.

"Is it Esther, Mother? I parted with her some time ago, an' I've been walkin' about by myself sence"—

"I'm glad to hear *that*," interrupted Mrs. Drennan viciously.

"But ye were sayin' I'd no right to be talkin' to her," pursued Dan, as firmly as his trepidation would allow of, "an' so I'm thinkin' I'd betther tell ye at wanst that Esther an' me is goin' to get marrid some time or other" —

He paused, quailing at the expression of his mother's face; well as he knew her, he was not prepared for the manner with which she received his announcement. For a moment she sat perfectly silent, rocking herself to and fro and clapping her hands together; then a perfect storm of rage and grief burst forth.

"Oh, glory be to God! that I should have lived to see this day whin me own son, me only son, ups and says to me face that he's goin' to break me heart in me ould age! Och thin, if yer father was alive, you'd niver dar' do it, so ye would n't, but becase I'm a poor lonesome widdy ye may thrate me as ye may — puttin' that girl over

me head, me that 's been a good mother to ye always, Dan!"

"Ah, mother, don't be goin' on with the like o' that," put in the poor lad, much distressed. "Av coorse I would n't dhrame o' puttin' anny wan over yer head, let alone a young girl like Esther" —

"Sure, that 's the very thing ye 're doin'," retorted his mother, angrily. "Av coorse ye won't — av coorse ye will, though! Your wife 'll expect to be misthress here, so she will — not that I 'd have had a word to say if it was annybody else — but *Esther*, that bould, dirty streel of an Esther" —

"Mother, don't be talkin' of her like that," cried Dan, rather nettled, "she 's the best-natured girl ye could see, an' — an' hard-workin', an'— oh, she 's good ivery way — as good as she 's beautiful."

"Don't dar' spake like that to *me*," cried his mother fiercely; "d' ye think ye know betther nor I do? I ought to have tould ye before that I 'd niver consint to a match with her; but troth, I niver dhramed ye 'd *raly*

take up with Esther. I knew ye were goin' on; but I on'y thought ye were jokin', so I did. I did n't expect ye 'd be wantin' me to make way for the likes of *her*."

"Sure neither me nor her 'ud be wantin' you to make way at all, at all. Esther 'll be on'y glad to work for ye, and spare ye all the throuble she can"—

"Work, is it?" interrupted Mrs. Drennan; "musha thin, there 's not a ha'porth of work she 'll do. No, but it 's me she 'll be expectin' to attend on her, while she 's enj'yin' herself."

"Sure Esther 's workin' from mornin' till night, now," put in Dan, meekly; "does n't she support Pether as well as herself?"

"Pether!" in a sort of scream. "Pether, d' ye say? Troth I 'm that upset I was near forgettin' Pether. D' ye mane to bring him here too, him that I 'd be afeard to spake to this minute?"

Dan paused confounded; in his previous rapture he, too, had forgotten that the presence of his future brother-in-law would complicate matters exceedingly.

"Heth," he said at last. "I was forgettin' Pether myself. I 'm sure I don't know what we 'll do wid him. Esther 'll niver part with him, an' sure there 's no room for him here at all, so there is n't."

"I 'm obliged to ye for that word, Misther Drennan," vociferated the female representative of the name. "Ye 're goin' to turn me out, I s'pose, as ould as I am, to make way for that daft fellow beyant. But not wan step will I stir for ye — I 'll tell ye that — not wan!"

"Mother!" ejaculated Dan aghast. "What put such a notion as that in yer head? D'ye think for all the gould in the world I 'd dhrame o' such a thing? Me that owes iverything to ye, I 'd as lief put meself out o' the house as put you out."

He suggested this contingency as the most remote that could possibly occur, but Mrs. Drennan, no whit mollified, was quick to take exception to it.

"Oh thin, *that 's* the way it is — is it?" she returned with increasing indignation.

"Yer goin' to desert me altogether — goin' aff to that dirty, disrespectable cabin of Esther's, I s'pose, whin you an' her 's marrid, an' I may be left to die by meself."

Poor Dan gasped with horror as his innocent words were thus distorted; tears twinkled in his eyes and he was incapable of any other rejoinder than a feeble shake of the head.

"Well, in the name o' goodness what is it ye *do* mane?" inquired his mother, promptly seizing her advantage. "They can't be comin' here, the couple of them, anny way — ye see that yerself, onless ye mane to turn yer ould mother out — an' ye 're not thinkin' of goin' to live beyant, ye say, an' Esther won't part from Pether. How in the world will ye be able to get marrid?"

How indeed? Dan was much puzzled to answer that question to himself, and far too much dispirited to attempt to argue the matter further; and Mrs. Drennan, confident of having gained the day, withdrew

in triumph to her own apartment. Left to himself, Dan crouched gloomily over the smouldering embers, drearily contemplating the ruins of his castles in the air. He had had "words" with his mother for the first time in his life — that in itself weighed heavily on his heart and conscience — and there appeared to be no possibility of bringing about a marriage to the girl of his choice. Mrs. Drennan's antipathy might be got over in time; Dan knew she was disappointed at his not having selected a girl with "a bit of money" of her own, and was further aware that Esther was far from being as thrifty and orderly as his mother would naturally wish; "but how can she, the crathur?" he said to himself; "her that has to work so hard all day, an' wid that poor misfortunate Pether to be lookin' afther." In time, under his mother's influence, he was sure she would develop into the perfection of a housewife. Peter himself was the chief obstacle, and, he was obliged to own, almost an insurmountable

one. Even if Dan's mother could be induced to consent to the marriage, the violent temper and uncouth habits of the deaf-mute were such that she could hardly be expected to allow him to form one of the family.

"I 'll spake to Esther meself in the mornin'," said Dan with a heavy sigh. "May be I could persuade her to put the boy somewhere that they 'd take charge of him."

But he knew nevertheless in his heart she would never consent to such a plan, and, though grieved, was not surprised at the indignation with which she scouted his suggestion.

Indeed, the more he saw of Peter, the more he was convinced that no one in the neighborhood could undertake the management of him, even if they were willing to attempt it; the deaf-mute's temper, always passionate, had become ungovernable since his sister's engagement, and there were times when Dan was almost in bodily fear of this strange uncanny being whose jeal-

ousy led him to play all sorts of pranks on him. On one occasion, when walking quietly with Esther down the lane, a large stone whizzed suddenly past Dan, almost grazing his ear, and looking up he espied Peter's wild eyes gleaming behind the hedge. Another day, as he stood talking to his betrothed in the doorway of her cabin, with his back incautiously turned to the interior, he was suddenly seized from behind and almost throttled by the deaf-mute, who had crept up to him unnoticed, and flung his long powerful arms around his throat. Though Dan endeavored by every means in his power to ingratiate himself with the repulsive creature, he almost despaired of success, but an unlooked-for incident occurred which did more to elevate him in Peter's favor than all his previous efforts.

It was October, bright and chill; the golden glory of tree and hedgerow deepening into russet brown; haws clustering in ruddy garlands on the latter, and bramble and eglantine stretching forth long berry-

laden branches by the wayside as though to invite the attention of the passers-by. Flashes of another scarlet were gleaming among the lime-trees of "the Lord's" park; a quivering, seething mass of brown and white and tan in the foreground was kept well under control by sundry cracks of the whip and extraordinary expletives from the wiry, brown-faced huntsman; a few ladies were to be seen here and there, and the M. F. H. himself was exchanging the customary compliments with the owner of the demesne. Cub-hunting had begun, and this was the first meet of the season. The whole party partook themselves presently to Rowley's Bottoms, a covert that had never been known to fail; there was intense anxiety for a short time and then a burst of "music," a general stampede, and sundry wild halloos from the ragged contingent which prepared to "folley the hounds" on foot announced that the fox was away.

Juno, "the Lord's" old blood-mare, once the fleetest of her kind, but of late entirely

absorbed in the duties of maternity, heard the strange medley of sound, as she grazed in her distant paddock, and throwing back her beautiful head with a snort or two, scampered wildly round and round, followed by her family in various stages of development. Many a quiet laborer working in the adjacent fields, hearing the same sound and filled with similar enthusiasm, flung down spade and hoe, and darted in pursuit; most of the farmers of the better class had already taken to the field on whatever hacks they could muster, so there were few to notice or reprimand their defection.

Esther heard the tumult too as she stood over her washtub outside the cottage door; the condition of her scanty wardrobe and that of Peter imperatively demanding soap and water. In a moment suds and garments were alike forgotten, and running a little way down the lane she descried the whole "field" at a distance of a couple of hundred yards. On she flew in wild excitement, her eyes flashing, her cheeks glowing,

her sunny hair blown about her face; in a short time she gained her favorite point of vantage, and perched herself on the top of a high wall whence she enjoyed a good view of the surrounding country.

In the mean time, Peter, quick to perceive that he was alone, and moreover — Esther in her excitement having omitted to take her customary precautions — free to go whither he liked, darted also from the cottage as soon as she was fairly out of sight. Not in the direction she had taken, though — no, no! he was far too cunning for that. Liberty was his for the present, and liberty was sweet; he scampered off accordingly in exactly the opposite way. A fresh breeze was blowing, lifting his elf locks from his temples, and causing his blood to course madly through his veins. He leaped and pranced along the road in much the same state of excitement as that which seizes animals on a windy day. As he ran, he waved his long arms above his head, and uttered sounds weird and unearthly enough to ter-

rify any unwary passer-by. It was no wonder that a solitary rider, who came suddenly face to face with him at a sharp turn of the road, should have reined up his horse in some consternation. Peter also paused for a moment, and then, bitten by one of his unaccountable impulses, made straight for him, clutching at the bridle with one hand while with the other he endeavored to unseat the horseman. The horse plunged wildly, but the rider, a big, powerfully-made man, after vainly endeavoring to wrench himself free, raised his hunting-crop and rained down such a show of blows on the head and face of his adversary that the latter was obliged to loose his hold. The whole affray could hardly have lasted two minutes, and in one more the successful combatant was clattering down the road, while Peter, frenzied with pain, and half blinded with the blood which streamed down his face, staggered wildly in pursuit, and at last fell prone and motionless upon the ground.

He was restored to consciousness by the

sensation of something delightfully cool and refreshing on his brow, and something equally cool and refreshing and of unaccustomed flavor moreover, filtering through his lips. Looking up, he perceived Dan, who was supporting his head and bending over him with the utmost anxiety. He scowled on catching sight of this hated face and form, and his first impulse was to rise and make his escape; but an increased dizziness, and a sudden return of pain on attempting to do so, caused him to fall back helplessly.

"Lie still, me poor fellow," cried Dan, forgetting that his words could not be heard. "Lie quiet now, an' ye 'll be betther in a while."

Peter watched him with those strange eyes of his, as he continued to bathe the wounded head, and after a time presented afresh the glass of whiskey and water which he had hastily procured from his own home (without, however, consulting his mother) as soon as he saw Peter's state. Gradually

as the latter gazed and felt the comfort afforded by the external remedy, and the renewal of strength caused by the internal one, he regarded Dan with less disfavor. And when Drennan, seeing his patient was now in a condition to walk, made a bandage of his checked pocket-handkerchief and kept it in its place with his own bright colored necktie, an expression of something like gratitude was visible in the deaf-mute's face. On being assisted to rise, moreover, Peter clung willingly to his protector's arm, and walked along beside him feebly enough, but almost forgetting his injuries in a ludicrous pride at his unusual adornment.

Esther in the meantime, seated on her wall, was placidly discussing "the sport" with a little group which had gathered round her, and freely commenting on the different riders as they cleared the low hedge that ran at right angles with the wall and crossed the field.

"That's Misther Blake, that is, leppin' over now; he looks a thrifle betther nor

he did, but he is n't gettin' his health at all, they say."

"Did ye see Mahony? — th' ould divil. 'T was him that got Barney put out of his house beyant. If his horse 'ud on'y fell back on him now" —

"Whisht!" cried Esther imperatively, interrupting the last speaker. "Here 's the Lord's daughther herself — not a word out o' yez now, on'y lookin' at her."

A silence fell upon the party as her ladyship passed them; Esther gazing enviously on the slim figure and bright face, rosy with excitement and exercise; taking in every detail, from the jewelled pin at the fair Amazon's collar to the easy swinging stride of her handsome chestnut horse. She heaved a deep sigh as horse and rider were lost to view.

"Ah! it 's well for her! What would n't I give to be a lady?"

"Troth it 's the gran' lady intirely you 'd make, Esther!" cried a facetious neighbor; then with an affectation of a fash-

ionable drawl at ridiculous variance with his brogue; "D' ye folly the hounds, Miss Daly?"

"Oh ye—es!" returned Esther in the same tone; and with a hearty laugh the little party dispersed, some in the track of the riders, and others more soberly inclined to their own domestic affairs. Esther, however, still remained perched upon the wall, her face turned in the direction taken by the object of her envy, and her mind in a strange medley; burning resentment that others, not half so good as she was, should nevertheless be so much better off, mingling with the wildest, most impossible dreams of future greatness.

"Can you tell me which way they went, my good girl?" said a masculine voice immediately beneath her; and Esther, startled from her reverie, looked down at its owner, whose approach she had been too much absorbed to notice. A tall, fine-looking man, appropriately mounted on a big, powerful horse, had drawn up close to her and was

gazing at her with an expression in which amusement mingled with impatience. A handsome face enough, in a certain florid style, with a good deal of sandy whisker, and bold, light-blue eyes in which a dawning admiration was sufficiently perceptible to tickle Esther's vanity.

"The last o' them wint over there," denoting with her slender brown finger the direction in which she had so long been gazing. "Ye'll overtake them aisy, for they're on'y gone a little while." The stranger thanked her, and had already half crossed the field when a shout behind him caused him to slacken his pace and turn in his saddle, thereby descrying Esther hurrying after him with a white handkerchief in her hand. He had hardly time to admire the grace and fleetness of the flying figure before she stood beside his now motionless horse, the color mantling in her cheeks, a smile on her pretty parted lips.

"Ye dropped this, yer honor!"

"I'm glad of it," returned the rider gal-

lantly, "for it has given me an opportunity of seeing a finer run than I could have looked for to-day. In fact, it beats any I have ever seen with the hounds."

The stranger spoke with a very perceptible brogue, and in a loud, jovial voice; his admiration was more evident than before, and Esther, blushing and dimpling all over her upturned face, thought she had never seen so delightful a man.

"And what may your name be?" he pursued after a pause. "I've only just come to this neighborhood myself, and every one is a stranger to me."

"My name is Esther Daly, an' I live over beyant," jerking her thumb over her shoulder with an expressive gesture. She was well disposed to be communicative, but at this moment a twang of the horn recalled her interlocutor to himself. "Well, I must be going," he remarked, gathering up his reins again. "I'm much obliged to you, Miss Daly, and hope we may meet again."

Miss Daly! Esther trod upon air as

she betook herself homewards. Never was any flattery so sweet, any admiration so intoxicating, as was conveyed to her by the words. Here was some one who acknowledged her worth and importance; who, gentleman as he was, or at least as she took him to be, was willing to treat her as an equal. To what pitch of inward exaltation her vanity would have raised the girl had her meditations been uninterrupted it is impossible to say, but she was presently very efficiently recalled to herself by the shock of discovering that Peter was nowhere to be found.

With her vague dreams, her foolish satisfaction, vanished in a moment, Esther rushed hither and thither, wringing her hands and eagerly inquiring at every cabin in the neighborhood for news of the fugitive. But the answer being invariably in the negative, her anguish and anxiety were at fever-height when she descried Dan with his charge in the distance. The relief which she at first felt soon changed to fresh woe

on discovering his condition, and pushing her lover hastily on one side and drawing down Peter's injured head on her shoulder, she embraced and wept over him with passionate grief.

Dan explained as well as he could the circumstances under which he had found the lad, and his suspicion that he had been subjected to rough usage.

"Them cuts on his face is blows, ye see," he said, lifting a corner of the bandage. "An' lookit, Esther, at them welts — he 's been up to some of his mischeevous thricks, so he has, an' some wan has been chastisin' him."

Esther flashed round on him, her very tears dried up by the fire of her wrath.

"Who is it?" she cried, "who is it that dar'd do it? If I knew, I 'd murther them, so I would. Tell me, ye gomeril, an' don't stan' there lookin' at me."

"Sure how 'ud I know?" returned Dan good-humoredly. "Whoever did it won't let on — ye know that. Aisy now, alanna,

let 's get the poor misfortunate boy home to his bed — that 's what 'll be the best."

"If I knew," went on Esther, drawing in her breath and clenching her hands — "if I on'y knew! If ye could tell me, Pether avick, who it is that laid a finger on ye — but ye 'll niver do that, an' I s'pose we 'll niver know, ye crathur, ye!"

Here Peter, quick to mark the expression of her face, and guessing at the nature of her inquiry, broke out into a renewed frenzy at the recollection of his injuries. He shrieked and gesticulated in the impotent endeavor to make himself understood, and finally wrenching himself away from Esther staggered down the road in the direction whence he had come. Only a few steps, however, for overcome anew with weakness and dizziness, he fell heavily forward on the ground.

"Take him home, in the name o' God!" cried Dan, as they both hastened to his assistance. "Ye 'll have him dyin' on ye if ye don't look afther him. See now — get yer

arm undher him like this, an' we 'll lift him between us."

Esther obeyed with many lamentations, and they managed with some difficulty to drag the half-fainting creature homewards. Dan stood by, watching Esther, as, having installed Peter on his nondescript bed, she knelt beside him, chafing his long, nerveless hands, and kissing him repeatedly. But he was not long suffered to remain there.

"What is it ye 're waitin' for?" she inquired irritably, glancing at him over her shoulder. "You can do nothin' for him — be off out of that to yer work."

Dan, much hurt that his real anxiety and distress should be deemed of such small account, turned slowly away with a reproachful look, and walked sadly up the lane, pausing every now and then to listen, in the faint hope of being recalled.

"If she 'd on'y love *me* like that!" he said to himself with a heavy sigh. "Her heart 's in that lad — the poor misfortunate innocent! Hothin indeed I may give up all

hopes of persuadin' her to part wid him. All I can do is wait, wait, an' have patience."

And with this wise resolution, but in a very despondent frame of mind, Dan returned to his labor.

CHAPTER IV.

DEALINGS WITH "THE QUALITY."

If the interior of Peter's head left something to be desired, the outer shell was sound enough; before many days his wounds had healed, and had it not been for a few unsightly scars, he would have borne no traces of the encounter. Esther's anxiety about his injuries, and curiosity as to their cause, had likewise speedily vanished from her inconsequent mind, and the ruddy, well-spoken stranger, who had so much attracted her, now reigned paramount in her fancy. She was not long in finding out his name and all about him, and the information had increased the interest with which he had inspired her. He was a Mr. Lawrence Cassidy, and had recently taken a large farm in the neighborhood, the number of his acres and the size of his house

justifying the title of *squireen*, or gentleman-farmer, by which he was universally designated. He was a bachelor, and lived at the "White House" in company with his sister, who was a widow, and "quite the lady;" the style of her Sunday attire filling the humble congregation of the chapel she attended with wondering admiration.

On the following Sabbath, Esther resolved to betake herself to "the Heath" for her devotions, though it was a good two miles further than the little white-washed chapel-of-ease which she generally frequented. She did not think it necessary to inform Dan of her intention, knowing that he would be at a loss to understand her motive, which indeed would have been difficult to define unless as a devouring curiosity to see again the "fine man" whose civil speeches had filled her with conceit, and a no less eager desire to behold his sister's much talked of finery.

Long before poor Dan had finished lathering his honest face, or had screwed his neck into the hugely high collar and saffron-col-

ored stock which formed so important a part of his Sunday gear, Esther had "claned herself," donned her bonnet (where the reddest of roses and greenest of ribbons were harmoniously allied), and was on her way to the place of worship.

She arrived in good time, as it was her purpose to do, and established herself outside the door that she might have a good view of all comers. The little building was almost empty, but a stream of people wound across the common, and men and boys stood in knots in the churchyard, and balanced themselves on the low stone wall which surrounded it.

Presently the priest arrived on horseback, and the murmur of voices gave way to a respectful silence as he dismounted and entered the chapel. A crowd of worshippers followed him, the more aristocratic squeezing themselves into the few benches, while the vast majority knelt humbly on the earthen floor. The loitering boys were marshalled up by a pompous schoolmaster, who

accelerated their pace by sundry applications of a well-used cane; an old woman with a limp white sun-bonnet dangling over her eyes hobbled up the path, and gazed with a scandalized expression at Esther. "Sure his riverence 'll be at the altar by this," she remarked, "an' a girl has no call to be stan'in' at the door at all. G'long in out o' that, whoever ye are."

Esther was on the point of retorting with spirit, when her attention was diverted by the arrival of the very persons about whom she was so much concerned. An outside car at that moment came clattering up to the gate, and a lady cautiously descended, crossing the churchyard with slow, mincing steps, while her charioteer, who was no other than Mr. Cassidy himself, drove rapidly off to a farm-house close by to put up his horse till after Mass.

Esther gazed open-mouthed at the approaching figure, heedless of the pokes and nudges by which her self-appointed mentor endeavored to recall her to a sense of duty.

Mrs. Lyons' attire was certainly remarkable. Esther thought she had never seen anything so "stylish" as the many-flounced silk dress, extremely shiny and of a violent purple color, the black lace shawl which — to suit the inclemencies of the advancing season — was supplemented by a tippet of yellow fur, and the white straw bonnet trimmed with large bunches of purple and green grapes which reposed on the laboriously-waved sandy tresses. A black lace veil drooped from this bonnet and harmonized to a nicety with its bacchanalian adornments; bunches of grapes and vine leaves being embroidered thereon, one of which completely masked the wearer's nose, while her eyes peered uncomfortably out from between two others.

Esther stood aside to let this important personage pass, and dropped a respectful curtsey, which the latter acknowledged with a stately inclination of the head.

"Why, then, is that you, Mrs. Brophy?" she cried, suddenly catching sight of the old

white-bonneted woman aforesaid, who still stood by the chapel door, her anxiety for Esther's spiritual welfare having retarded her own entrance. "I've been wishing to see you about those chickens you've been promising me so long. Mr. Cassidy and myself are tired expecting them. You won't be after disappointing me now, will you?"

Mrs. Lyons' voice was shrill, and her grammar and pronunciation alike faulty; but Esther was too ignorant to perceive this, and to her mind the short jerky manner of speaking, and the lofty, not to say arrogant tone, were aristocratic to the last degree.

"Ah then sure, Mrs. Lynes, ma'am, it's the bad luck I've had with them same chickens," returned Mrs. Brophy; "did n't the fox ate them on me, and them the finest iver I rared?" wiping a perfectly dry eye with the corner of her apron.

"Ah, ye don't mean to tell me that the fox made away with the whole of the clutch!" cried Mrs. Lyons, with increasing acerbity,

for she was disappointed at missing a very successful bargain.

"*Ivery* wan, God help them, ivery wan — sure it 's ruined I am intirely by them foxes. I was thinkin'," added Mrs. Brophy, who had her own motives for being unusually garrulous, and who could perhaps have otherwise accounted for the disappearance of the chickens in question, — the price at which in a weak moment she had agreed to dispose of them being considerably below that offered in the market,—"I was thinkin' on'y this mornin' of axin' ye to spake to his honor, Mr. Cassidy, about them — him that 's so fond of folleyin' the hounds. May be he might say a good word for me to some o' the gintlemen — for I 'm desthroyed wid the foxes althegither" —

Here Esther, pushing forward, and hastily curtseying again, interrupted with the eager announcement that she had some elegant chickens to dispose of, and would be glad to take them up to the White House on approval if the lady wished.

"I 'll speak to you after Mass, my good girl," said Mrs. Lyons, beaming on Esther between her grapes and vine-leaves. "The priest's coming out of the vestry now, I think," — a rustle and stir amid the congregation within denoting the fact — "but I 'll have time to say a word or two to you afterwards while I 'm waiting for the car'age."

Esther, well content, followed her future patroness meekly into the chapel, just as Mr. Cassidy came striding up the path, his hat jauntily placed a little sideways on his curled locks, and his whole attire, from his tight-fitting coat to his well-blacked boots, shining with gentility.

He passed Esther without recognizing her, entered the family pew, which was railed off from the common herd and furnished with green baize cushions, and spreading a large white pocket-handkerchief, redolent of musk, beneath his knees, was soon absorbed in his devotions.

After Mass, however, when Mrs. Lyons and Esther were concluding their treaty out-

side the porch, Mr. Cassidy turned sharply as he passed, and, recognizing his fleet-footed friend, paused with a smile.

"Is that yourself?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Ay, is it, yer honor," returned Esther, blushing with pleasure, and "dipping" in the most approved fashion. "I hope yer gettin' yer health, yer honor. It's a fine mornin', glory be to God!"

"It is, indeed," assented Mr. Cassidy, adjusting his hat to a nicety at the angle he usually affected. "That's the girl I was telling you about," he observed, nodding sideways to his sister; "the finest runner in the country, I'll be bound. Well, good-mornin'."

"Good-mornin', yer honor," repeated Esther, all in a twitter with delight and far too much excited to make any sort of a stand against the hard bargain Mrs. Lyons was driving. Only on her way homewards did she realize that she had agreed to part with her chickens for a sum which would hardly pay for their keep.

"Wan and six a couple!" she said to herself, suddenly awakening to the sober realities of life. "Sure it is n't the price o' the male itself — an them as fat as butther, God bless them. Ah, bad luck to that ould wan — I b'lieve she 'd skin a flint. 'T is n't her brother that 'ud be goin' on wid the likes o' that. He 's a rale gentleman, so he is — a fine man — the very smile of him 'ud do yer heart good."

And at the recollection of the gracious condescension of her hero's words and manner, Esther smiled broadly herself and forgot her vexation.

She passed the whole of that day in a sort of dream, all her thoughts being gathered round the image of Mr. Cassidy. It would not be exactly accurate to say that she had fallen in love with him at first sight — there was too great a difference of station for that — but she thought him the handsomest and most charming man she had ever seen, and the heartiness and familiarity of his greeting filled her with absurd ideas of her own im-

portance. Poor Dan had hard times of it that day: convinced as Esther was that she was as good as any lady in the land, her homely lover found less favor than ever in her eyes. No explanation was vouchsafed of her absence from their own chapel, at the porch of which Dan had disconsolately watched till the last possible moment in the hope of her arrival; and altogether she treated him "like the dirt undher her feet," as he sorrowfully told himself on his homeward way. The only grain of consolation which was apportioned to him arose from the demeanor of Peter, whose jealousy and dislike had now, in remembrance of Dan's timely succor, changed to grateful affection. The marks of regard which the poor creature endeavored to show him comforted him in some small degree, inasmuch as they afforded promise that one, at least, of the obstacles to his marriage might possibly be removed. Peter's having "taken to him" was a step in the right direction, and who knew but that his mother's prejudice to him

might not, in time, be overcome? Dan's spirits rose at the thought, and his forgiving nature was prompt to find excuses for his betrothed; something had "put her about, an' she was n't herself, God help her!"

On the following morning, Esther dressed herself with unusual care and set out for the White House, carrying a basket of chickens. With a beating heart she passed in at the wooden gate and down the gravelled path which Mrs. Lyons dignified with the title of "avenue," and which culminated in an imposing sweep before the door. The house was a good-sized, comfortable-looking building, partially covered with ivy, and with all manner of sweet-smelling old-fashioned flowers blooming in the borders beneath the windows. The lawn on the other side of the gravelled space had not been mown for a considerable time, and was plentifully strewn with autumn leaves; a somewhat broken-down iron fence divided it from the field beyond, where cattle and sheep and a colt or two were placidly grazing.

Esther had ample time to take in all these details as she stood on the doorstep waiting patiently for some one to respond to the timid ring with which she had announced her arrival. No one answered her summons, however, and after a long pause, she took courage to ring again. This time a window on the right-hand side of the door was thrown violently open, and the silvery tones of Mrs. Lyons herself were lifted in greeting.

"Good gracious, girl, what a start you gave me! ringin' at this hour of the mornin' at the *hall*-door. I 'd have thought your own sense would tell you to go around to the back!"

"I beg yer pardon, ma'am — I humbly ax yer pardon, me lady," said Esther, dropping a deprecating curtsey; "sure you 'll excuse me — I 'm not used to havin' dalin's with the quality at all."

"Oh, well — that indeed!" responded Mrs. Lyons, somewhat mollified. "Well, as you 're there you may stay there, and I 'll come out to you."

The next minute, accordingly, the door opened, and the lady stood before Esther, a knitted shawl serving as a protection to her sandy head, on either side of which her thin locks were screwed up in the tight embrace of two large brass hairpins, thereby preparing the waves which ravished all beholders in the afternoon. Mrs. Lyons may or may not have had "siller to spare" — but certainly "walked in silk attire" on every occasion. A thin, crackling, fawn-colored gown of this favorite material now encased her spare form; it was plentifully decorated with grease-spots, worn at the elbows, and of a hue round the collar that indicated prodigious length of service, but it rustled portentously at every movement of the wearer, and to her humble neighbors conveyed notions of surpassing grandeur.

Esther was much impressed, so much so, that the subsequent demeanor of Mrs. Lyons in poking the chickens, feeling their breast-bones, and weighing them in her own fair hands, did not lower her in her esteem.

"Well, I dare say they'll do," was the verdict of the purchaser, when she had carefully ascertained that the objects in question were worth double the money she had offered for them. "I'll take them. Stand here till one of the servants takes them from you." Then raising her voice, "Maggie, come here a minute."

No answer. Mrs. Lyons repeatedly called, her tones rising in the end to a perfect scream; and at last a tall, gaunt figure with lean arms plentifully besmeared with soapsuds appeared upon the scene.

"What are ye shoutin' for?" she inquired respectfully of her mistress; "Maggie 's gone home this two hours, an' she says she 's not goin' to come no more."

"What d' ye *mane*, woman?" returned Mrs. Lyons, forgetting her gentility in her exasperation.

"I mane that the girl 's killed with work," was the rejoinder, "an' ye 've been at her the whole mornin', so ye have — washin' day an' all — an' she 'll put up with it no longer, she says, so she 's *aff*."

With this parting shot Mrs. Lyons' housekeeper withdrew, leaving her mistress to vent her feelings in a storm of invective.

"The ingratitude of that, — her that had nothin' to do only help in the house and milk the cows and look after the hens. At her indeed! I 'd a right to be at her, I think, and at all that 's lazy like herself," — raising her voice for the benefit of the vanished Bridget, — "the stairs not scrubbed down at ten o'clock in the mornin', and the kitchen like a pig-sty. She may well complain of the work, I 'm sure, — killed indeed, is she? May be she 'll have worse to complain of before she 's done!"

"Ah then, must n't she be a quare wan!" remarked Esther, who was always ready to put in her word. "How 'ud she like to be me, pickin' turnips or workin' in the garden from mornin' till night! Why I 'd scrub down them stairs," peering in at them, "as soon as look at them, so I would, an' milk the cows before I 'd turn round!"

Mrs. Lyons looked sharply at her, and

made a rapid calculation in her head; a sudden thought struck her — she might perchance conclude an even more satisfactory bargain than that already achieved.

"Ye would, would ye?" she said, "and what wages are ye earnin' now, may I ask?"

"From four to five shillin' a week," returned Esther quickly, quivering with excitement, but too clever to allow her interlocutrice to perceive that she guessed her intentions. "Troth, it's hard set we are to live at all, me an' me brother. Av we had n't them chickens and the pig to look to, we 'd starve entirely, so we would."

"Four or five shillings, — good wages I call that," said Mrs. Lyons; "ye need n't be making a poor mouth at all, I think; but then the work 's hard, I dare say. Now here, there 's next to no work, I may say, and the girl has her keep, of course, and tea and sugar, and soap and starch for her washin', *and* her good wages — her — good — wages," she repeated, gazing meditatively at Esther, and considering how little she

might safely venture to offer such a likely substitute for her last treasure.

"If I was to offer you the place now?" she observed after a pause, "on trial, you know, for the first, and afterwards, if you suited me, for a permanency, what would you be willin' to come for? Remember you 'd have your keep, and tea and sugar, soap and starch, — well, we 'll say five pounds a year, shall we?"

"Five pounds a year!" ejaculated Esther, ready to cry with disappointment; for Mrs. Lyons' glowing speech had led her to expect a better offer. "Laws, ma'am, I could n't! Sure I have me brother to keep entirely, an' he not able to do a stroke o' work at all. Five pound a year! that would n't be two shillin' a week" — pausing to count on her fingers — "an' it 's all I can do to feed him now."

"Ye 'd have your own keep, child," argued Mrs. Lyons, and she again set forth the advantages of her offer; but Esther, sorely as she was tempted, was obdurate, —

her love for Peter outweighing all other considerations. At last, after much haggling, the mistress of the White House was induced to raise the sum to six pounds, with which Esther closed, stipulating that she should be allowed to sleep at home, and also to run thither at midday to prepare Peter's "bit of dinner."

Having arranged to present herself early on the morrow, and jingling in her hand the few shillings for which she had sacrificed her fowls, Esther skipped joyfully homewards, breaking every now and then into snatches of song, and repeatedly telling herself that she had arrived in "the very nick o' time" at the scene of her future labors. The change from outdoor work to domestic service was a great rise in the world, and the prospect of her new life was altogether delightful. She was in such a good humor that she could afford to be civil to Dan, who came up at his dinner-time to find out the cause of her non-appearance at the garden where they both worked. He was somewhat startled at first

on hearing of the change in her prospects, but seeing her delight, congratulated her as heartily as he could.

"I 'm overjoyed," he said, — "overjoyed, so I am. The on'y thing I 'm thinkin', Esther, is, we won't be togither in the garden anny more."

"Musha, I 'm glad of it!" returned his lady-love. "I 'm sick an' tired o' the garden. Me back was broke wid the weedin', an' as for that ould fellow beyant" (meaning the gardener), "he was niver contint, so he was n't. Ay, I am glad to get shut o' the garden anny way."

And Dan gazed wistfully at her, and heaved a deep sigh, but said no more.

CHAPTER V.

AN ESTHER "GLITTERING IN ROYAL ROBES."

ESTHER began her new duties next day, Mrs. Lyons initiating her therein, and, as a preliminary, introducing her to every room in the house. The girl was loud in her admiration of all she saw, and indeed, to her ignorant eyes, everything in Mr. Cassidy's establishment was on a scale little short of magnificent. What could be grander, for instance, than the best parlor, or, as Mrs. Lyons preferred to call it, "drawin'-room," with its Brussels carpet and red curtains, and furniture all of the brightest green? Cases of wax flowers under glass shades adorned the chimney-piece, vases and china ornaments each on its own little woollen mat were displayed in every available corner, there was a knitted antimacassar on top

of the piano, and a wealth of these appendages protected the chairs and even descended to the footstools. Large highly-colored portraits of the owner and his sister hung on either side of the gilt-framed mirror, and at least six books were disposed at regular intervals on the round table in the middle of the room.

The ordinary living-room, though less striking, impressed Esther nearly as much from its size and the solidity of the big mahogany table and horsehair-covered chairs; but the most attractive apartment of all was Mrs. Lyons' own bed-chamber, where her private effects were chiefly stored. There were moreen curtains to the windows and the four-post bed, a dressing-table draped with pink glazed calico, — the muslin cover was at present in Bridget's wash-tub, but Esther did not discover its absence, — and finally a good-sized wardrobe, the contents of which, prompted by the girl's wondering rapture over what she had hitherto seen, Mrs. Lyons was good enough to display.

"See here, child, my best," pulling out a dark crimson silk, "my second-best ye 've seen," — indicating the violet robe beforementioned; "there 's more behind."

"Oh laws, ma'am, are n't ye the lucky lady!" ejaculated Esther, enviously passing her hand over the folds.

Mrs. Lyons was not ill-pleased.

"I 'm thought to have taste," she observed, taking down the "best," and shaking it out affectionately. "Ye don't understand much about it I dare say, but the cut of this is considered very elegant. It 's the Pareesian style, real Pareesian, the dressmaker told me."

"Sure it 's beautiful," said Esther with a sigh of exceeding longing. Her admiration was so great, and Mrs. Lyons was so much gratified therewith, that when, after a little searching among her treasures, she came upon a couple of very ancient garments which she had intended to dispose of to the ragman, she was generously moved to bestow them on Esther instead.

The latter received them with profuse outward gratitude and not a little inward scorn.

"Sure the ould things has hardly a thread holdin' together," she remarked to herself, as she turned them over afterwards in the privacy of the kitchen, "an' she wid that press chock-full o' gran' clothes. She 's a rale deceit, so she is, smilin' up at me an' goin' on as if they was as good as the best. Well, may be I 'll be able to take a turn out o' them — but the misthress is a caution!"

Esther was "cute" enough to find out Mrs. Lyons' weak points very soon, and after a short time rose high in her favor. The girl was naturally lazy, but strong and active, and when she did choose to give her mind to her work could get through it quickly and well. It was her interest now to please her employers, and she gave universal satisfaction, even getting round Bridget the housekeeper, who was agreeably surprised at her sharpness and readiness, and who found her, moreover, a most

entertaining companion. The person with whom, of all others, she most desired to ingratiate herself, however, was at first the one who noticed her least; Mr. Cassidy appearing to trouble himself very little about the new handmaiden, and contenting himself with a careless word or two now and then, or an affable nod when he happened to pass her. It was strange that the means by which she at last managed to attract his attention should have been her solitary infringement of the rigidly virtuous rule of conduct which she had imposed on herself under his roof. It happened in this wise. Mrs. Lyons and Bridget were both absent for the day, the latter being suddenly called to the bedside of her sick mother, and the former having betaken herself to the market-town for shopping purposes. Esther knew that Mr. Cassidy had ridden off to a meet of the hounds some hours before, and being thus left to her own resources was determined to make good use of her oppor-

tunities. She roamed, therefore, blissfully over the house, prying into all the drawers, opening such cupboards as were unlocked, and fingering everything that she could, being bent on doing nothing by halves. She peeped into Mr. Cassidy's room, where there was nothing very remarkable except a mingled odor of boots and tobacco, and his every-day garments in an untidy heap on the floor, just as he had hastily discarded them for the more important tops and cords. To Mrs. Lyons' chamber, therefore, Esther went next, in search of something more interesting, and found — joy upon joy — that by a lucky oversight her mistress had left the key in the wardrobe door.

A delightful half-hour ensued. Esther took down all the dresses, shook them out, and inspected them critically; opened all the bandboxes, and examined the handkerchiefs and gloves that were neatly piled on one of the shelves.

"It 's her that has luck!" she exclaimed

bitterly. "To think of her with all them beautiful things — and the ugly ould face of her. Och, I 'm sick o' the thought of her! She 's no lady, so she is n't, an' none of her silks an' satins 'll make her wan. I 'd be a betther lady meself, I b'lieve. I 'd have more the looks o' wan, anny ways."

She held the crimson silk in her hand, and as she spoke, turned towards the looking-glass, holding the fabric up to her chin.

Then a sudden thought struck her, and she chuckled aloud with glee. Why should she not dress up in this magnificent robe, and judge for herself of her appearance in the garb of a lady? No one would know, and it would be "fine sport." No sooner planned than executed; Esther, with eyes dancing with merriment, hastily divested herself of her outer garments and assumed the "Pareesian" gown, rejoicing as much in the thought of the trick she was playing "unknownst" on her employer, as in the unwonted treat to herself. The dress, however, which had been made to suit the

spare figure of Mrs. Lyons, would not meet across Esther's well-developed form, and she was obliged to supplement it with a white lace scarf which she found amongst her mistress's treasures. This done, she approached the glass once more and gazed at herself in rapture. The transformation was certainly wonderful: the shade of the silk suiting her complexion to perfection, and the graceful contour of her slender neck being set off by the soft folds of lace. She clapped her hands with delight, and then conceived the project of descending to the best parlor that she might judge of the effect of her whole figure in the mirror above the mantelpiece; Mrs. Lyons only possessing a small glass in her room. Downstairs, therefore, strutted Esther, purposely passing close to the door-post, and brushing against the wall that she might enjoy the rustle of the silk; a chair was eagerly pushed opposite the chimney-piece, and up she hopped on it, turning round and round as on a pivot, throwing

herself into a hundred fanciful attitudes, and smiling and nodding at her own reflection in pure exuberance of delight.

Suddenly a peal of laughter brought her to her senses, and turning affrightedly round she beheld the face and form of no less a person than "the masther," Mr. Cassidy himself. There had been no "find" at the covert they had drawn, and he had returned in disgust considerably earlier than he had intended.

Esther's face vied for a moment with the crimson of her borrowed robes, and then turned pale; and she remained on her perch, gazing down with blank horror on the unlooked-for spectator of her performance.

Mr. Cassidy in the mean while steadied his countenance to a becoming degree of gravity, and when he next spoke it was with a sternness, not to say ferocity, that terrified the culprit.

"Come down out o' that," he said, "you impudent little thief, you!"

Esther flopped down obediently and fell at his feet, bursting into loud sobs, and frantically appealing for mercy.

"Oh, yer honor, if ye 'll on'y forgive me this wanst! sure it is n't thievin' I 'd be afther. Glory be to God, I 'd sooner cut off me two hands nor steal anythin' belongin' to you or the misthress. Sure I on'y — I on'y" — she stopped, her voice lost in tears.

"Well, speak!" returned Mr. Cassidy, biting his lips and endeavoring to look very fierce. "What were you doing with my sister's clothes, you good-for-nothing girl? D' ye know when she hears it she 'll walk you straight out of the house, and not only that, but into prison most likely?"

"Oh, save us and bless us!" ejaculated Esther, rocking backwards and forwards, and bedewing the ground with her tears. "Oh, your honor, God save ye for the good, beautiful gintleman! Forgive me this time, an' I 'll niver, niver do annythin' wrong again! Oh, don't tell on me, yer honor, don't for the love of God, an' may" —

"You have n't answered me yet," interrupted her master. "Get up off the floor and speak sensibly, unless you want me to send for a policeman to take you straight off now. What were you doing with the mistress's clothes?"

Esther got up slowly from the ground and looked appealingly at him. The crimson folds fell gracefully round her slight form; big tears stood on her long eyelashes, but round her mouth there hovered the ghost of a smile. Something told her all at once that a good deal of Mr. Cassidy's indignation was assumed.

"I on'y wanted to see how I 'd look if I was a lady," she said demurely.

Mr. Cassidy's self-possession deserted him, and he burst into a roar of laughter, slapping his cord-clad nether limbs, clapping his hands together, and finally wiping his eyes in an ecstasy of mirth.

"Ye 'd like to be a lady, — would ye?" he said, as soon as he could speak. "'Pon my life, that beats all!" then, suddenly re-

suming his gravity. "You 'd make a very fine lady, Esther. It 's a pity you are n't one."

"Heth, may be I 'd make a betther lady nor many a wan that 's called so!" rejoined Esther, saucily. His laughter had reassured her, and she was quick to see that her best chance of regaining his good graces lay in prolonging his amusement. "If Esther was a lady, she 'd know how to cut a dash!"

"Would you indeed?" said Mr. Cassidy, laughing again.

"Ay, would I," she cried. "I 'd dhrive in me carridge an' two horses, like her ladyship's beyant," throwing herself on the green sofa, and leaning back for a moment in lifelike imitation of the attitude assumed by "the lord's daughther," on such rare occasions as she had beheld her. "I 'd have them all curtshyin' to me, so I would," jumping up and performing a series of respectful dips, her features being meanwhile composed to an expression of the most pro-

found admiration. "I 'd ate biled chickens, an' dhrink wine; ay, an' I 'd have parties with singin' an' dancin', an' iverythin' gran'."

"I dare say you have plenty of dancing and singing as it is," returned her master. "Did n't I hear you at it in the kitchen, the other day?"

"Ah, sure I was on'y just dancin' a double to amuse Bridget," said Esther, with affected bashfulness. "I was just goin' on that-away to plase her."

And glancing slyly at her master, and looping the silken folds in her hands, she pointed her foot tentatively.

"Just this way," she said, reading approval in his eye. Then lilting a merry tune she began to dance. The "double" — a particularly graceful form of the national dance — lends itself to many pretty attitudes and unexpected movements, of all of which Esther amply availed herself. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, a roguish smile dimpled over her face; her beautiful

head turned now on one side, now on the other, to mark the rhythm; she had never been so bewitching in her life. Cassidy had flung himself into a chair and looked on, entranced; at the end he cried "Bravo!" in loud delight, and beat his booted heel upon the floor.

"Well, sure ye won't tell on me, yer honor?" said Esther, in a wheedling tone, thinking this a favorable opportunity for pressing her point.

"Bedad, I won't," returned Cassidy elegantly. "That 's to say, if you 'll promise to dance for me now and then."

"Och thin, indeed I will, yer honor. God bless yer honor, I knew ye would n't be hard on poor Esther," cried the latter, out of her wits with delight at her own lucky escape, and still more at his admiration of her performance. "I 'll be off now this very minute, an' take off the misthress's things, an' niver, niver, will I lay another finger on them as sure as I live."

"Wait a bit," rejoined Cassidy lazily.

"That was a double, was it? Let 's have a jig."

Nothing loath, Esther fell to again, singing and dancing, round and round, faster and faster, her figure swaying always gracefully, her voice quaintly imitating the notes of a fiddle, and breaking off ever and anon in a short, queer little crow of triumph. Cassidy laughed, and clapped his hands, and nodded his head in time to the music. Again and again Esther danced, and louder and more enthusiastic grew his applause. At last the former glanced at the clock and broke off in dismay.

"Lord bless us, yer honor, I 'll raly have to go," she cried, "or the misthress 'll be down on me afther all."

She flew upstairs, and in an incredibly short space of time had restored the garments to their proper place, and removed every trace of disorder from her mistress's room.

Mrs. Lyons never discovered the trick that had been played upon her, luckily for

Esther, whose tenure of office would have been a short one had she been found out. Mr. Cassidy kept his own counsel, though he delighted in teasing the girl by making remarks in her presence which led her to believe that her secret was about to be divulged. They were now on far more intimate terms than before, her master never passing her without speaking, and taking an obvious pleasure in her saucy sallies; while Esther, though more diligent and respectful than ever in the presence of Mrs. Lyons, was completely at her ease with him.

CHAPTER VI.

DAN PUTS HIS FATE TO THE TEST.

"An' where are ye goin' this evenin', Dan? beggin' yer pardon for axin' ye that same question," remarked Mrs. Drennan sarcastically. "Ye 're dhressed out so grand I hardly knew ye."

"Ah, sure ye know well enough," retorted Dan, somewhat exasperated. "Have n't I been at ye this week an' more to come wid me? I 'm goin' to the Hallow Eve party at the school, where ye always come wid me ivery year on'y this."

"Ay, it 's thrue for ye; I have no heart to be goin' this year," sighed his mother. "I 've no fancy to see ye goin' on makin' a fool of yerself wid that Esther. No, but it 's she that 's makin' a fool of you, if she 's the sort I hear she is," she cried with sudden anger.

Dan vouchsafed no answer. He had been far from happy of late; seeing less and less of Esther as days went by, and being forced to own to himself that on the rare occasions when they did meet she was most unsatisfactory. Mrs. Drennan's constant innuendoes, moreover, tended to increase the growing uneasiness in his mind.

"Come here, till I have a look at ye," grumbled Mrs. Drennan, after a pause. She was angry with her boy, but none the less did she take a pride in his good looks and smart attire. Dan obediently approached, and slowly turned round before his mother, that she might judge of his appearance. His Sunday clothes were well brushed, his hair plastered down to a becoming smoothness, and a brand new green cravat encircled his neck. Mrs. Drennan fingered this admiringly.

"That 's iligant!" she remarked.

Dan squinted down at it with some pride; he admired it too as only an Irishman can admire this favorite hue. The mere name

of "the green" is emblematic of all beauty to an Irishman. Ask any peasant which color he prefers, and he will stare and laugh at you in his amazement at the possibility of there being two opinions on the subject. What is it in his nationality that casts such a glamour over everything that he deems even remotely connected with it? John Bull, in his sober, determined way, is quite as convinced of the superiority of his native land over all others, yet he does not thrill at the mere sight of "the red," and a rose can be spoken of in his hearing without in the least disturbing his equanimity. Mention a leek or a thistle incidentally in the presence of a Welshman, or a canny Scot, and unless you use the word in a direct appeal to his national feelings it will awaken no very strong emotion; do but whisper the little noun "shamrock" in the presence of an Irish peasant, and you let loose the floodgates of I know not what tides of passion and patriotism.

Dan and his mother were thoroughly sin-

cere in their belief that green was the most beautiful of all hues; therefore, as the latter watched the departure of her son, she was somewhat consoled for his "contrairiness" by the fact of his looking "rale han'some," and the thought of the envy which his new cravat would enkindle in the breasts of "the other boys."

Dan took his way along the road to the schoolhouse; his heart a little lighter because of his mother's smile, and his youth and natural capacity for enjoyment asserting themselves as the squeaking of the fiddles grew more and more audible.

"Why, thin, is that yerself?" cried a jocular voice, as he drew near a little party hastening in the same direction; and he descried the portly form of Mrs. Green dimly outlined in the dusk. "Is that yerself, Dan? An' where 's yer mother? She did n't come out, did n't she? Ah, sure, that 's like himself, — 'D' you go,' says he, 'an' I 'll stop wid the childher.' He 's a rale quite man, so he is, but *I* do be likin' a

bit o' fun, as ould as I am, an' so used yer mother, Dan. What 's the matther wid her at all? Ah!" as Dan made some indistinct rejoinder, "ye 're the boy, Dan! Ye dunno, ye say? Troth, an' I 'd like to know who does know, if ye don't. *Ah*," with great expression, "don't be goin' on that-away! Sure, it 's breakin' her heart ye are, an' may be yer own 'll be broke, too, afore ye 're done. That Esther 's no good, — no good at all, so she is n't, an' not the match for a dacent boy like yerself" —

The chorus of approbation which greeted this speech was so distasteful to Dan that, detaching himself from the party, he made all speed to the schoolhouse, where the light and the music coming through the door invited every one to enter.

It was not a very imposing building, this white-washed cottage, with its thatched roof, albeit the legend "National School" was set forth over the door, and "the Masther," Mr. Quigley, was a most stately and impressive personage. Few of his barefooted

scholars could read even passably, or write their own names, but the round text in which he "set them their copies" equalled the finest copperplate, and was frequently embellished with Gothic characters, and he was very particular to teach them the "roots" of such words as they occasionally conned.

The priest himself stood in the middle of the room, directing everything, and by his very presence promoting the enjoyment of those about him. Yet a figure more utterly at variance with his surroundings would have been hard to find.

Father Duffy was a remarkable man, — remarkable in his looks to begin with. Though the son of a small tradesman in the neighboring country town, his bearing was sufficiently aristocratic and imposing to have done credit to a prince. He was tall, broad shouldered, and erect, with rather long and perfectly white hair, which gave him so venerable an appearance that it was startling, on closer inspection of his well-cut

features, to discover that he was still a comparatively young man, probably not yet forty. His face was pale, worn, and stamped with a certain settled peace of expression; there was a dreamy look in his eyes, and his smile was bright and kindly. Like the ring of the sainted king of old, on which were recorded the three loves of his life, *Dieu*, *France*, *Marguerite*, Father Duffy's face to any physiognomist was the index of the affections which swayed his heart. His first and greatest love was given to his God, his second to his fellow-men, his third to books.

Dan doffed his hat, and pulled his forelock respectfully as he approached this personage, and received a cordial handshake in return.

"Your mother is n't here?"

"No, yer riverence; she — she did n't care to come."

"Well, well, I suppose she 's getting old like the rest of us," returned the priest, quickly marking the shade that overspread Dan's face. "Esther is here, however, waiting for you."

"Troth, she did n't wait long, sir," said Dan, half smiling as he glanced towards the middle of the room, where Esther, clad in one of Mrs. Lyons' cast-off garments, was footing it away with a "boy from the town." She nodded saucily over her shoulder, as Dan made his way towards her, and smiled more graciously than usual. Mr. Cassidy was necessarily absent, but she was determined to make the most of such humble enjoyments as came in her way, and it was part of her programme to "have the other girls mad" with jealousy of her appropriation of Dan.

The poor lad's heart leaped with delight, and he applauded Esther's performance more vigorously than any of the other onlookers. However she might be disapproved of by severe matrons, and slightly envious maidens, Esther was the acknowledged queen of the evening. Her good looks were more sparkling than ever; no one could come up to her "at the dancin';" she had a sharp and amusing, if not always

a "pretty," wit of her own, and her silk attire, though ancient, and leaving much to be desired in the way of cleanliness, conferred an undeniable prestige.

When the fiddles paused, and the dance came to an end, Esther turned to Dan and slipped her hand through his arm.

"We 'll be havin' the next together," she remarked. "That 's a beautiful silk handkercher ye have there," gazing at the green cravat before mentioned. "Ye 're grand tonight, so ye are."

Poor Dan quivered with bliss, not knowing that the remark was made much more for the edification of Mary Brady, who chanced to be listening, than for his.

Even the most unfortunate of the wayfarers in this weary world occasionally come to little flowery spots in life's highway, where for a short space they may rest or revel ere again forced to tread the stony onward path. Have we not all, now and then, had moments of unreasonable happiness, in which, while they lasted, not one

thing, but everything, was endowed with a glamour wholly indescribable?

Such rapture as this fell to Dan's lot for full two hours — a long time for unalloyed happiness. He danced with Esther again and again, talked to her as much as he liked, and sat beside her at the supper, to which the whole company did honor, and at which, as was subsequently pronounced, there was "the best of atin' an' dhrinkin'" attainable on a fast-day.

After this repast the true Hallowe'en festivities commenced. Apple candles were consumed in abundance, lead was melted, nuts were burnt in couples, and more frequently in triplets — the first shadow falling across the brightness of Dan's evening on his discovering that Esther was pursuing the latter plan.

"What are ye afther?" he asked somewhat irritably, as he saw her carefully placing three nuts on the brick which was laid for the purpose on the schoolmaster's hearthstone. The nuts on these occasions are, of

course, emblematic of lovers, and when three are set forth, it denotes that the lady has two strings to her bow; the first nut that hops into the fire betokening a faithless or discarded heart.

"I 'm just havin' a bit o' fun," returned Esther, with a sly glance round. "That 's me, ye see, in the middle, an' this neat little roun' fella 's you, an' this big wan — troth, I b'lieve I won't tell ye who this wan is;" and throwing back her head she gave way to her favorite cackle.

"What d' ye mane at all?" murmured Dan, flushing a deep red, and looking anxiously, half angrily at her.

"Musha, would n't ye like to know?" she retorted, well-pleased at the emotion she had called forth. "D' ye think," — speaking rather louder than her wont, but feigning unconsciousness of the general attention which her words attracted, — "d' ye think ye 're the only boy that 's afther me?"

"Ha, Dan, my fine fella, what d' ye say to that?" laughed a man at his elbow, while

the girls drew back from Esther with their noses in the air, and Mrs. Green was heard to remark loudly from a corner "that r'aly she was ready to dhrop."

"Whist," whispered Esther in Dan's ear, "sure I 'm on'y thrickin' the girls," an explanation which satisfied him, though he could not repress a feeling of anger and annoyance as, after a moment or two, the little round nut representing himself hopped gayly into the midst of the flames.

The table was now cleared, and the most important ceremony of the evening was inaugurated. The priest had left as soon as he had seen the party comfortably settled at supper, or the ensuing performance might have been considered too nearly allied to "superstitious observances" to have been countenanced by him.

The table was cleared, as I have said, and at each of the four corners was placed a large plate; in the centre of one lay a ring, in another a few silver coins, a third contained some water, and the last was piled

up with a sinister looking little heap of earth.

The company then drew lots; the first to try her fortune, whether through chance or design, being Esther. A dead silence ensued as she was blindfolded, twirled round and round till it was impossible for her to remember the whereabouts of the plates, and then marched up to ascertain her lot for the coming year. Round the table she walked with an expectant smile on her face, and her right hand outstretched — once, twice, thrice! the supreme moment had at last arrived, and her outspread finger descended on the ring.

With a crow of delight she pulled off the bandage, and gazed triumphantly round at the laughing and applauding onlookers.

"Bedad, Esther, it 's settled, is it?" said a man beside her. "We knew you were bespoke, but we did n't know Dan was in such a hurry as that."

Poor Dan, blushing and bridling at this public recognition of his hopes, thought the

finger of Providence pointed surely to their realization, and, in his delight at the prospect, failed to notice that the toss of Esther's head was something more than coquettish, and that a momentary shade passed over her face at the mention of his name. So firm was his belief in the oracle that it remained unshaken even when Mrs. Green, subsequently thrusting her hand into the self-same plate, also drew out the magic circlet. Roars of laughter greeted her as she divested herself of her bandage and surveyed the ring with comical dismay.

"Sure, it was the fortun' I was afther!" she remarked in explanatory tones, "an' it 's a husband I 'm gittin'! Troth, it 's well himself is n't here: he 'd be beginning to shake, I think."

"Och, thin Mike had betther be lookin' out," retorted some one, and then the game proceeded, young and old having their turn; some rejoicing in the prospect of matrimony, or of an unexpected inheritance which was to drop from — the Lord knew where — to

the lucky hand which touched the money, and others startled, and suddenly grave, as their fingers splashed into the water which denoted the journey across the sea, so little to the mind of these ardent lovers of their own soil. Whether the bandage was not quite so tightly tied but that the wearers had *some* notion of the position of the dreaded little heap of earth, which from its color was more easily perceived, and which all were so anxious to avoid, or whether the kindly fates favored them, is uncertain, but none of the toil-worn hands that hovered so anxious over the table were yet brought into contact with this token of ill-luck.

At last it was Dan's turn, and stooping before Esther he asked her to blindfold him. She obeyed, nothing loath to take what might be in any way a prominent position, fastened the bandage securely, and twirled Dan round so rapidly as almost to take his breath away.

"Now, no thrickin', mind," she said, as she led him to the table.

Dan paused a moment, smiling, but with a sudden feverish anxiety coming over him. If he, too, could only find the ring, then he would feel quite safe and happy in the certainty that Esther was to be his before the year was out. Such a coincidence would put the matter beyond the possibility of doubt — oh, he must, *he must* succeed in making a lucky choice. Slowly, and with a strange sense of helplessness, did Dan travel round the table, unconsciously doing his best to peer beneath the bandage which, however, this time had been too tightly bound to admit of any dishonesty. His hand trembled perceptibly, now extended in one direction, now in another. Which was the corner in which he had seen the ring just as the handkerchief was coming over his eyes? — to the right or to the left? Surely it was here. His hand was rapidly outstretched, then withdrawn, then stretched out again with a sort of desperation, finally descending on something cold and soft, the very touch of which filled him with horror. He had

sought for happiness and had come upon — *death!*

A hush fell upon the little assembly as Dan, with shaking hands, endeavored to remove his bandage, his countenance blanched and his mouth quivering. No one moved or spoke for a moment, and then Esther broke the silence with a loud laugh.

"Am I to be wife an' widow an' all in wan year?" she cried.

Dan, with a sudden effort, tore off the handkerchief over which he had been fumbling, and crossed the room to the corner furthest away from her. For a moment or two he saw and heard nothing; how could she treat him so? how had she the heart? He himself was totally unnerved by the sudden blow he had received; his kindly neighbors, whose well-meant attempts to rally or condole with him he received with a blank, uncomprehending stare, had, as they had plainly shown, been shocked at his bad luck; only Esther could laugh and jeer at him.

No one cared to try their fortune after Dan's mishap, and in a little time the fiddles struck up again and people fell to dancing. Dan looked at the swaying figures and hearkened to the mirthful sounds as one dazed, and then all at once awoke from his dream of misery to a sudden passion of anger. He made his way over to Esther and stood beside her, his white face set and stern.

"How long are ye goin' to stay here?" he said; "it 's gettin' late. If ye 'll come now, I 'll see ye safe home."

"Thank ye kindly, Misther Drennan," returned Esther, flushing angrily. "It is n't convaynient to me to be lavin' yit, an' ye need n't be puttin' yerself about to wait to see me home, for I want none o' yer company."

She was already in a bad humor, some of the neighbors having treated her to a bit of their minds on the subject of her behavior, and was the more indignant at his change of tone; she had, moreover, another reason for

not desiring his escort, which will transpire presently.

"I wish ye good-evenin', thin," said poor Dan, with his heart swelling within him almost to bursting; and so he stepped out, away from the maddening sneer on her face, and the jangling of fiddles, and the babel of voices, to the quiet night, where the darkness wrapped round him as though in pity, and the breeze sighed for him, and the stars peered down at him compassionately from the far, far distant sky.

CHAPTER VII.

MOONLIGHTERS.

ESTHER was one of the last to leave the schoolmaster's hospitable roof that night, and purposely loitered on her homeward way to let such of her acquaintances as lived in the same direction pass on before her.

When the last was out of sight, she walked on briskly enough, turning a little out of the beaten path, however, and betaking herself by a short cut across the fields to a certain stack yard at the back of a large farm-house in the neighborhood.

The moon shone brightly, the bats flew about, and the distant hooting of an owl had a ghostly sound in her ears; the loud baying of a watch-dog, moreover, warning her of a more real danger near at hand. Cold chills crept down her spine, and the perspiration

stood on her brow, yet she was undeterred from her purpose, which was indeed no very sinister one. Making her way to the wooden gate, she climbed over it and walked noiselessly to the centre of the yard. Then, choosing one at random from the many corn-stacks whose shadowy outlines loomed above her, she ran quickly round it three times, and finally stretching out her hand, plucked out an ear of corn.

It was too dark for her to see clearly this token of her fate, but one touch of her fingers told her that she had chosen an ear of barley as the prototype of her future husband. A little cry of triumph broke from her as she felt the *bearded* grain, and the realization of a certain dream which she had of late unconsciously cherished now appeared before her almost as a certainty.

"Ha, Dan, my boy," she cried, "if I 'm to be a bride before the year 's out, it 's not with you I 'll be goin' to the altar, an' if ye 're to be undher the sod yerself, I 'll be no widow of yours."

She climbed over the gate again, and rapidly made her way back to the high-road, along which she sped as if a regiment of soldiers were in hot pursuit of her, starting whenever a branch rustled, and casting terrified backward glances over her shoulders every now and then.

Presently the imaginary dangers of which she was in dread paled before something much more alarming, because real. Following her down the lonely road, at dead of night, and far away from any habitation, she distinctly heard a footstep, — a heavy footstep that came steadily after her, that quickened as she fled and stopped when in her overwhelming terror she paused. With a stifled scream she rushed along the road, her limbs faltering under her, stumbling, almost falling, whilst the step gained upon her rapidly; and glancing fearfully behind her, she saw what appeared to her to be a gigantic white figure in steady pursuit. Nearer and nearer it came, and now she heard a hurried, panting breathing closer

behind her, which might have assured her that her pursuer did not at least belong to the supernatural order, but which served only to increase her terror. At last, feeling herself incapable of advancing any further, she turned, just as a long white arm was extended so as almost to touch her, and fell with a wail of terror at the figure's feet.

"Och, in Heaven's name, whoever or whatever ye are, don't harm a poor girl."

"Esther!" exclaimed a well-known voice in a tone of pleased recognition; "I might have known it was you by the way in which you ran; but what in the name of goodness, girl, brings you here at this time o' night? Do you know how late it is? What are you doing here on the high-road?"

Amid her joy at discovering that the object of her frantic terror was no one more alarming than Mr. Cassidy, Esther was conscious of a still keener satisfaction at his tone: did not this meeting fall in in a most marvellous manner with the prophecies of the evening?

"Oh, yer honor, what a fright ye 're afther givin' me!" she exclaimed, as she gathered herself up, still trembling in every limb. "I'll not be the betther of it this good bit."

Mr. Cassidy laughed.

"You ran like a hare, girl," he returned. "Why did n't ye call out? Then I 'd have known you, and would have spared myself the trouble of running to see who or what you were, flying along between the hedges."

"Sure, I did let wan screech," said Esther, "an' thin me v'ice seemed gone on me altogether. I thought ye were a ghost, yer honor; in that long, light coat o' yours ye looked the same as wan, an' sure I niver thought it 'ud be yerself."

Mr. Cassidy, who had been supping with a friend, and had been entertained sufficiently hospitably to make him even more jovial and talkative than was his wont, laughed loud and long.

"Why, then, if there are ghosts to be met with in these parts, I 'd better see you

safe home, and protect you from them," he said. "But you have n't told me yet what you were doing on the roads at this time of night," he added more gravely. "It is n't a nice or a proper thing for you at all."

"Sure I 've only been to the Hallow Eve party at the school," explained Esther, whose joy at the first portion of the speech was somewhat damped by the disapproval expressed in the latter; "me an' all the boys an' girls hereabouts goes ivery year."

"Why are n't ye with some of the girls and boys then?" asked Cassidy sternly, "instead of being here alone, and — the school is n't in this direction; if you 've come from there you ought n't to be on this road. None of your tricks with me, Esther. If Mrs. Lyons were to hear of this, she 'd give you the sack to-morrow."

"Oh, glory be to God!" cried the girl, bursting into tears, "sure I was n't doin' a ha'porth o' harm, sir. I just run round be Misther Casey's haggard to thry me fortun', so I did."

Cassidy laughed again, and began to walk slowly in the direction of Esther's home, the latter accompanying him.

"Was there a witch in the haggard, or did the good people appear to you?" he asked pleasantly.

"Save us and bless us, no, sir," returned Esther, with an uneasy glance round, lest any of the latter might be in the neighborhood. "It 's on'y just a bit o' nonsense that the girls does be goin' on with. Ye choose a stack in the dark, ye see, an' it must be in a sthrange yard, so that ye don't know the kind it is, an' ye must go round it three times, an' thin ye pull out a bit of corn, an' that 'll tell ye the sort o' husband ye 'll get."

"Is that so?" returned the master, much amused. He was just sufficiently fuddled to see nothing remarkable in the fact of perambulating the roads so calmly, at such an hour and with such a companion, and strolled along as leisurely as if it were broad daylight and Mrs. Lyons were beside

him. "And how do you find out that?" he proceeded.

"Ah, sure, it 's on'y nonsense, ye know, sir; I would n't be doin' it on'y for the fun o' it. I don't raly b'lieve in it, o' coorse," said Esther, at that moment, nevertheless, glowing with triumph at the memory of what the oracle had promised in *her* case. "The girls does be sayin' accordin' to the looks o' the corn they dhraw 'll be the husbands they 'll git. They may be ould or young, or straight or crooked, and sometimes they 'll get a hoult of a blasted wan, an' that tells them they 'll be havin' bad luck, an' sometimes they 'll choose a fine big wan — that 's the way, ye see" —

"Well, did *you* find a nice one, Esther?" asked Cassidy, stopping short and smiling down at her.

"Oh, an illigant wan altogither!" she retorted, laughing; "sure I would n't be contint wid annythin' on'y the best."

"Bedad, the best is n't too good for you," returned Cassidy, with half-tipsy solemnity.

"You ought to make a good match, for ye 're out-and-out the finest girl in the country."

He spoke half in joke, and without any afterthought; but to Esther this speech was delightful earnest, almost the fulfilment of her wildest dreams.

She was literally incapable of answering, and walked along by Cassidy's side in a perfect trance of delight. They were now close to her tumble-down abode, and she was about to announce the fact, when sudden discordant sounds issuing therefrom drew his attention to it before she could speak.

"What in the name of Heaven is that?" he exclaimed, as the air reëchoed with repeated cries and the sound of prolonged hammering on the crazy door.

"It 's Pether!" ejaculated Esther; "it 's on'y me brother, yer honor. He 's a misfortunate poor crather, an' — an' I 'd rather ye 'd not be goin' near him. He 's not himself sometimes, an' I 'm afeard he 's mad wid me for bein' so long away. Thank ye

kindly, sir, for seein' me home, but don't come furder wid me for the love o' God. Pether does be rale wild sometimes, an' may be if he seen ye whin I open the door he 'll lep out on ye an' hurt ye. Oh, not at all, yer honor," in answer to a remonstrance from her master, " he would n't lay a finger on me — it 's on'y sthrangers he minds. If ye plase, yer honor, don't be comin' near the place at all."

She turned as she spoke, hastily unbarred the door, and slipped inside almost before Cassidy had realized her intention. She was really uneasy about his safety, and, moreover, anxious that he should not catch sight of Peter, who, tenderly beloved as he was, could not be exactly considered a credit to the family.

Having secured the door on the inside, however, her first act was to betake herself to the window, whence she surreptitiously peered out at her master, who was still standing motionless in the moonlight, gazing at the cabin as if he expected her to reappear.

Had she had any such intention, she would have been prevented from carrying it out by the behavior of Peter, who, already much incensed at his sister's long absence, was infuriated at her failing to minister to his wants on the instant of her reappearance. With one or two rapid strides he was at her side, and had thrust his shock head close to the dim pane to discover what it could be that thus diverted her attention from him.

The moon was shining full on Cassidy's upturned face, and in one moment Peter had recognized him, and with a howl of rage broke away from Esther, and flung himself violently against the door. Esther hastened to his side and threw her arms round him, endeavoring to pinion him, and striving to soothe him, — but it took all her powers of persuasion, and required the utmost exertion of her physical strength, before she could reduce him to anything like a reasonable state. However violent he might be, Peter was careful never to hurt his sister; in his most blind fits of

rage she exercised a certain control over him; therefore, though they struggled together for some time, he finally gave in, and retreating to his seat by the hearth, sat scowling at her in impotent anger.

Esther breathed more freely, and resuming her post at the window, ascertained that Mr. Cassidy had disappeared; upon which, turning again to Peter, she gave vent to her exasperation by sundry angry looks and threatening gestures, expressions of a displeasure to which he was wholly unaccustomed, and which testified to the extent of her absurd passion for her master.

Peter gazed on her at first with unmitigated astonishment: he had frequently been quite as violent before, and she had never seemed to take it amiss; why should she be annoyed now? He steadily refused to go to bed, notwithstanding Esther's repeated signs, but sat staring moodily at her, his face growing more and more dark and threatening while he puzzled his poor childish brain with this question. Why was she angry at his

endeavoring to revenge himself on this man, when she had never resented his former outbursts, and had even laughed when he had attempted to assault Dan? Poor Peter had never troubled himself about the latter's relations with his sister; he knew nothing of love, or of matrimony either, but he could realize that if Esther had not minded his treatment of Dan, who came oftenest to their cabin, it was odd that she should be so irate about a total stranger. Of the fact of Cassidy's being her master he was quite ignorant; it was doubtful if he even understood the reason of his sister's daily absence from home, or that the bread he ate was the result of her labors. So Peter sat and glared at Esther, who, after venting her irritation in the manner aforesaid, melted suddenly and had recourse to caresses and gentle force; persuading him at last to retire to his uninviting couch, after which she herself withdrew, sadly fatigued, to her own apartment.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAN CONSULTS ANOTHER ORACLE.

ABOUT eight o'clock one evening, Father Duffy was sitting quietly in the front parlor of his own house. It was a queer little triangular room, low in the ceiling, and damp in the walls; there was not a vestige of fire in the grate, the furniture was scant and shabby, and the carpet worn into holes; yet a happier man than Father Michael Duffy at that moment it would have been hard to find. The reason was twofold: he had three or four hours of absolute leisure before him, and he had a new book in his hand.

Father Duffy, being a simple man, had at first found it somewhat difficult to reconcile his passion for books with the two more important loves unto which he had vowed his life.

"Michael Duffy," he said to himself many a time in the early stages of his career, "the Lord won't ask you when you die how many books you have read, but how many souls you have saved. He won't be hard on you if you have n't done all you could for your intellect, but Heaven help you if you have n't done all you could for your poor!"

With these principles it is not surprising that Father Duffy's literary tastes were at first seldom gratified; his time belonged to his people, — that was so self-evident a fact that he hardly took the trouble to assert it, and such small means as he possessed he had received from them too. The money was his own, doubtless, and as such he could do what he liked with it, but far would it have been from him to spend it in what he deemed luxuries, while many in his flock wanted the actual necessaries of life. Thus it was that after the duties of the day were accomplished, Father Duffy spent many an hour, which another would unhesitatingly

have devoted to well-earned relaxation, in tramping over damp bogs and stony hill-sides to succor and console such of his parishioners as were in trouble, and those precious volumes, for which his soul was sick with longing as he espied them in book-sellers' windows, were suffered to remain undisturbed that Pat might have seed-potatoes, and that Biddy might bury her child "dacent."

After a time, however, the priest had discovered that the so-called necessaries of life were not so necessary after all, — at least to some people, — and that there were certain elastic qualities in time of which a determined man might easily avail himself.

Food, for instance, and fire, — well, they were good things in their way, certainly, but the former was really required in much smaller quantities than was generally supposed, and the latter, except in so far as was needful for cooking purposes, could, by a healthy man, be dispensed with altogether. As for sleep, it was indeed a pity, to his

mind, to waste so many hours as was customary when they might be so much more pleasantly and profitably employed.

The bodily frame of poor Father Michael Duffy, which, luckily for itself, however, appeared to be made of iron, had a hard time of it after this discovery. In the matter of food and sleep, its requirements were curtailed within the strictest limits that could preserve its union with the eager spirit, but the latter was given the nourishment for which it craved so passionately. In depriving himself of necessaries, Father Duffy felt himself to be entitled to luxuries; he was cold, and hungry, and weary, many a time, but he bought books and was a happy man. He looked one this evening, as he sat in his horsehair-covered chair, holding his one candle between him and his book. He was no literary glutton, but rather a *gourmet*, prolonging his enjoyment of the fare before him to the utmost, and daintily extracting its full flavor.

Suddenly a ring at the little jangling bell

made him start and look up with an expression of keen disappointment. This was probably a sick call; it was true, none of his parishioners were, so far as he knew of, in a condition to require his assistance, but unforeseen things frequently happened, and a call at this hour meant, he feared, nothing else. For a moment his sense of disappointment was as intense as had been his previous consciousness of well-being; he was but a man, after all, and human nature will sometimes assert itself even in a saint.

There was a colloquy at the door, steps were heard along the passage, and then there came a knock.

"Come in," cried Father Duffy, closing his book gently, and endeavoring to bring down his mind from the Elysium where it had been wandering to the sober realities of life. There was no trace of disappointment or vexation in his face as the door opened, but there was still a certain dreamy, startled look, as of one not thoroughly awake.

The door opened very slowly, as if to prolong his suspense, and to his surprise Dan advanced into the room.

"The girl tould me to go in to ye, your riverence," he explained, as he stood, hat in hand, before the priest's table.

"Well, Dan, what's amiss?" asked Father Duffy kindly. "Your mother is not ill, I hope."

"No indeed, sir; thanks be to God, she's finely. It is n't a sick call I 'm come about at all. It 's only a little matther o' me own, yer riverence, that I wanted to ax your advice about. I 'm — I 'm in a bit o' throuble, so I am."

This magic word broke the spell which had held the priest captive, and he withdrew his hand from the book on which it still lingered lovingly; it was a second-hand volume bound in calf, and its mere touch was pleasant to him.

"In trouble?" he said kindly. "Well, let 's hear about it, my poor fellow, and we 'll see what we can do for you."

"May be ye know about Esther an' me," began Dan shyly, twisting his hat round and round, and not daring to look the priest in the face. "We 've been keepin' company this good bit, but me mother" —

"Yes, I know," said Father Duffy, smiling; "she has told me all about it often. Well, of course it is hard for you, Dan, but still your mother has a claim on you that no one else has. You must be patient for a little longer. She 'll come round after a while, I 've no doubt, and then we must lay our heads together, and see what is to be done about Peter. You and Esther are both young, and can wait, you know, Dan."

"Ay," said Dan meekly. His face did not clear, however, and his voice, when he did manage to get it out after a long pause, was low and husky.

"It is n't that that 's throublin' me, yer riverence. I 'm on'y thinkin' — may be Esther *won't* wait."

"What?" said the priest sharply. He

knew Esther well, almost from her childhood, and though he had not a high opinion of her, and considered her to be in no way worthy of Dan, it had not occurred to him that she would think of breaking off such a very desirable match.

Dan raised his head and looked sorrowfully at his interlocutor.

"Yer riverence," he said, "I dunno how in the world I 'm to bring meself to say it, but I think Esther 's gittin' tired o' waitin' already!"

There was a long pause, and then the priest asked quietly: —

"What makes you think so, Dan?"

"I dunno," returned Dan slowly. "I dunno what makes me think so, sir, but I have a kind of a feel about it this long while. She has a quare way with her, so she has; wan day she 'll be as lovin' and as agree'ble, an' another she won't so much as give me a civil word or a kind look, an' at the Hallow E'en party" — here his voice shook — "we was goin' on a bit, ye know,

yer riverence — she was jokin' about bein' my widow in a year, an' she laughed, so she did, an' us not marrid yit."

His face flushed, and the honest indignation apparent in it proved contagious, Father Duffy feeling as angry with Esther as it was in his gentle nature to be with any one; he was silent, however, not trusting himself to speak.

"An' that 's not all," went on poor Dan; "she was throwing out hints the other night about me not bein' the on'y wan afther her, an' the neighbors is always at me, too, sayin' they can tell by her ways she 's on'y makin' a fool o' me; but sure up to this I niver minded them, thinkin' they was jokin' an' just goin' on for a bit o' fun, ye know, Father. On'y now, someways" —

He stopped and looked deprecatingly at the priest, almost ashamed of the suspicion which had forced itself upon him.

"Do you know who it is, Dan?" asked the latter quickly.

"Oh, not a know, Father," returned Dan eagerly, though his face fell at this seeming confirmation of his fears. "Sure, may be it's no wan at all, an' may be it's ivery wan. Esther's young an' — an' fond of a joke with annybody she comes across. She'll git more sinse before her and me's marrid."

His eyes were fixed on those of the priest in a passionate appeal to the latter for some encouragement to hope, but Father Duffy shook his head in silence.

"I suppose ye have n't heard tell of anny wan yerself, yer riverence?" interrogated poor Dan anxiously.

"No," said Father Duffy; "all this is quite new to me, but from what you tell me of Esther's behavior, and from what I know of the girl herself, I cannot help thinking it is likely there *is* some one else in the case. And Dan, my poor lad, it seems to me that the best thing you can do is to put her out of your head."

"I don't quite undherstand ye, yer

riverence!" said Dan, the sudden pallor which overspread his face, however, proving that he understood it only too well.

"I mean that you must give her up, Dan," returned the priest firmly; "give her up before she breaks that honest heart of yours. She is n't worthy of your love; she is trifling with you, and the longer you put up with it, the worse will be the heart-break when she casts you off. Listen to me, — I don't want, of course, to condemn her on mere suspicion, — go to her to-morrow and have a straightforward explanation. Ask her point-blank what she means, and if she *is* tired of you."

"I could n't do that, Father," interrupted Dan; "may be if I did, the answer 'ud be that she was, an' I could n't bear it. I ax yer pardon for not folleyin' yer advice," — lifting his miserable eyes for a moment and then dropping them again, — "but I can't do what you bid me. Sure, Father, it 's too late. Ye might as well tell me to

cut the heart out o' me body as to give up lovin' Esther. In fact, I 'd sooner do it," said poor Dan; "I 'd sooner die — I 'd *have* to die before I gev her up."

The words came out with a sort of sob, and the priest as he heard them was moved with exceeding pity.

"And what will you do, child," he said gently, "if she gives *you* up?"

"I dunno, Father," — with a sort of gasp, — "I dunno what I 'd do, an' that 's the thrute. I don't dar' even think o' that; for I feel as if I 'd go out o' me mind altogether. There 's no tellin' what I 'd be doin' if that happened. But I pray God it niver may. I don't *think* Esther raly wants to get shut o' me," he pursued, brightening up a little; "if she did, why would n't she say so? What I do be thinkin' sometimes, yer riverence, is that Esther 's that sort, if ye undherstand, that she must be always havin' some wan to joke with,— an'— an' to be goin' on with, ye know, Father," — apologetically. "She likes to have a man afther her, an'

that 's the thrute; an' why would n't she, the crathur, her that 's so young an' so han'some? An' another thing is, she likes to be up to her thricks, an' havin' the other girls mad jealous because sorra wan will look at them whin Esther 's by. Ye see, whin her an' me was workin' together at the Coort, it was *me* she had, an' now she hardly iver sees me, — an' so may be she is just havin' a bit o' fun wid some wan else. I raly do think that 's how it is, Father, an' there 's not a ha'porth o' harm in it, on'y av coorse it 's not what I 'd *like*."

Father Duffy cogitated. Dan was sharp enough, and his surmise was very likely correct; yet his very simplicity and forbearance towards the unworthy object of his love seemed to place her in a more contemptible light.

"You mean to put up with it, then, do you?" he asked dubiously.

"Well, Father, I have a kind of a plan in me head, an' that 's what I came here to ax ye about. Ye see, sometimes whin I 'm

cool and quiet, I can raly see things is as I 've just tould ye; but more times I begin to git angry an' jealous, an' to wondher, the same as I did whin I was talkin' to ye first, if may be the neighbors is right an' she *is* makin' a fool o' me, an' thinkin' o' takin' up wid some wan else. An' it upsets me altogither, so it does. An' another thing I do be sayin' to meself, is may be it is n't fair on her to be expectin' her to keep on lovin' me, an' thinkin' o' me, whin she niver sets eyes on me scarcely, an' is among sthrangers intirely."

"Do you mean to try and persuade her to give up her place then?" asked the priest.

"Oh, thin, indeed I wished I could, Father; an' I 've thried manny a time, but she won't do that for me; an' may be it was too much to expect of her. No, but I was thinkin' may be I might get work mesilf beyant at Cassidy's. I hard the boys talkin' this mornin', afther Mass, an' sayin' Casey — him that 's groom an' gardener, an' *gineral* man in it now — was turned away, an'

Mr. Cassidy was lookin' out for some wan else."

"And are you going to give up your good place?" asked Father Duffy, in surprise. "Think well of what you are doing, Dan. You are getting on well, and will perhaps end by being head gardener, if you go on as you have begun; whereas, you know, Mr. Cassidy will probably not give such high wages as you have been used to, and there will be no chance of a 'rise' for you."

"Ay, I know that, Father," answered Dan quickly; "but I could look afther Esther, an' — I 'm sure if I was wid her we 'd be as happy an' frien'ly as we was before; for she used to be rale fond o' me, rale fond," he repeated with conviction; "an' would n't it be betther for me to give up a little, nor lose her an' have me heart broke?"

The priest reasoned with him, but finally gave way in so far that he did not endeavor to deter Dan from making his sacrifice. He

could quite realize the truth of what the poor fellow urged, and that it was perhaps the only means of regaining the erratic affections of his lady-love, but it was a risk, a great risk. If Dan did not suit Mr. Cassidy, and his present place was filled up, he might be thrown out of employment altogether.

Dan was happy, however, in not being absolutely forbidden to carry out his plan, and retired after a little more conversation, leaving Father Duffy pondering deeply and making no attempt to reopen the precious volume which lay on the table in such tempting proximity.

"If ye plase, yer riverence," said Dan, suddenly reappearing at the door, "will ye kindly not mintion the matther to me mother for the present? I 'm thinkin' it 'ud be aisier on her an' on me too if I did n't let on to her what was in me mind till all 's done."

With that he hastily ducked his head and

fled away at full speed, in mortal fear lest the priest should call him back to express disapproval of this somewhat cowardly line of conduct.

CHAPTER IX.

DREAMS.

MRS. DRENNAN'S face was a study when, a few days later, Dan informed her with much trepidation that he had given "notice" to the steward at the Court, and had been engaged as "odd man" by Mr. Cassidy.

"I think," she said, when her ire had somewhat spent itself, "that ye 've tuk lave o' yer sinses altogither. Ye 're bewitched, Dan, to dhrame o' such a thing. Let me tell ye plain, I niver could have thought ye 'd demane yerself to go undher such as Cassidy. Yer father, ay, an' yer gran'-father, too, would have been long sorry to work for anny wan on'y a rale gintleman. Was n't yer father wan o' the Lord's ploughmen? An' to think that you, the on'y son I have, should go an' be takin' up with the likes o' Cassidy! Sure, he 's no gintleman,

so he is n't. Was n't his gran'father ould Cassidy the pig-jobber — as or'nary an ould fella as ye could wish to see? An' this wan comes an' calls himself a gintleman, an' sthrutts up an' down afther the min, *puttin' a breast on himself*" (a cutting allusion to Mr. Cassidy's somewhat pompous deportment) "whin his gran'father used to be thrampin' the roads. Musha, I've no patience with him — nor with *you*," she added with emphasis. "Little did I think to be shamed this way by me own son. I know well enough what ye 're afther. It 's that good-for-nothin' Esther that has persuaded ye to folley her there, an' when *she* spakes, av' coorse yer mother must n't dar' say a word."

Dan devoutly wished that such were indeed the case, extracting, nevertheless, a ray of comfort from the many words which his mother *did* venture to utter; evidently, notwithstanding the many hints that she had thrown out of late, she did not consider Esther to be in the least likely to cast him off.

The more he thought of it, the more convinced he was that his surmise was correct, that Esther's behavior was in a great measure due to her natural flightiness (which he did not, however, characterize by so uncomplimentary a word), and that when again thrown into his society, finding him always at her beck and call, always anxious to please her, and, moreover, at hand when she wished to play off her little airs and graces, she would not be proof against his devotion.

Esther's manner, however, on receiving the communication which on the following Sunday he imparted to her outside the chapel door, damped his ardor considerably.

"What in the name o' goodness are ye goin' to do that for?" she asked irritably. Then an angry light came into her eyes. "Ye want to be spyin' afther me, I s'pose."

Dan opened his eyes so wide, and looked altogether so startled, that Esther saw her mistake, even before his mild rejoinder had convinced her that he had no notion of the real state of the case.

"Ye 've no call to say that," he said gently. "I 've no wish to play the spy on ye, Esther, an' indeed I 'm not the wan to think there 's anythin' to spy afther. If ye do have a bit of a joke or a frien'ly word wid the boys about, I 'll not be wishful to prevent ye. On'y, whin all 's said an' done, why would n't I put in for me own share o' the jokes an' the kind words? Sure, asthore, I 'm hungerin' for the want o' them." He slipped his arm through hers, and looked appealingly in her face. "My heart feels ready to break sometimes whin ye won't look at me nor spake to me, but" — with a tremulous smile — "whin I 'm along wid ye beyant at the White House ye 'll *have* to throw me a word now an' agin, an' I can be lookin' at *you* as much as I like."

This tribute to her power over him was sweet to Esther, little as she cared for him; she had no mind to break with him altogether until she was quite sure of Cassidy's intentions. There were times when the latter's manner and words appeared to

justify her expectations; but frequently, when out of humor or preoccupied, he noticed her so little that she doubted if her dreams would ever be realized. On such occasions she was alive to the possibility of no one else coming forward if she cast off Dan, and was determined, as she said, not to be made the laughing-stock of "the counthry-side" by falling between two stools. Moreover, though, when she happened to be in a bad humor, or when the prospect of reigning as mistress at the White House appeared unusually tempting, the proximity of her faithful lover and his honest devotion annoyed and sickened her, there were times when his presence was agreeable to her. Not only did she dearly love to show off to others his abject state of subjection, but she took an odd pleasure in judging for herself of the extent of her influence over him. It amused her to watch the reflection of her ever-varying moods in his expressive face; to see him thrill with rapture when she chose to smile, or to cast him into the

depths of despair by one of her frequent frowns. Perhaps she liked to wound and make him angry better than anything else; it was an easy way of getting rid of him when she was not inclined for his company, and it was amusing to see him at her feet again, at, or oftentime before, the uplifting of her finger. Dan's heart made a very pretty plaything, and Esther used it much as a child uses an india-rubber ball, which it now throws high in the air, now turns curiously in its hands, the while it takes note, it may be, of the damage sustained in the recent game, and now with a well-directed kick of a sturdy foot sends merrily spinning over the stony road.

Such being the case, and Dan being evidently quite ignorant of her private projects, Esther felt she really did not much care if he did carry his plan into execution and take up his residence at the White House. Observing, moreover, Mrs. Drennan's velvet bonnet nodding in her agitation as she passed them on the road, and guessing how

distasteful her son's conduct must be to her, she smiled affectionately upon him, and announced in a loud voice that "it 'ud be a long while before she heard anything over which she rejoiced so much."

In a short time, therefore, Dan began his labors at the White House, and though the work was much harder than that to which he had been used, and the pay less, he was at first supremely happy. Esther played him off to her heart's content for the edification of Bridget and all other onlookers, and was as pleasant and friendly as he could wish.

But poor Dan's happiness was ever destined to be of short duration, and he soon found that the exchange of masters was not to his advantage. Mr. Cassidy was harsh and overbearing to his subordinates, and disposed from the first to be hard on the new arrival, who, though honestly doing his best, and working as diligently as in him lay, was neither very apt at learning his new duties, nor very prompt in carrying them

out. It did not tend to sharpen his brains nor to steady his hand, moreover, to be sworn at out-of-doors, and soon, — alack-a-day! — sneered at within. Esther's graciousness melted away before Mr. Cassidy's disapproval; it might be well to own a lover whom every one commended, but it was quite another thing to be engaged to "the dullest and most awkward lad that ever came about the place." She had formerly been proud of Dan, even when she found him most tiresome, but now she was ashamed of him, and his lot was hard indeed. She did not scruple to repeat to him the remarks which Mr. Cassidy so frequently made in her presence, with many an additional gibe of her own. As days went on, she showed him less and less favor, and in the end he was forced to own that the latter state of things was worse than the former one. He plodded on, however, with a sort of despairing determination: this was his last venture, and he *must* not allow it to fail. He could not contemplate

life without Esther, who, cruel and callous as she was, was still transfigured in her lover's eyes. The fault was his, he told himself; he was too slow, too stupid to be fit for her; she was right to be ashamed of him; and yet he *must* have her, — he could never give her up. "What 'll become o' me at all?" he groaned to himself, sometimes, as he went about his work; "what in the name o' God 'll become o' me if she won't come round to me in the end?"

So the winter wore away, Dan working early and late, and striving by willingness and attention to make amends for much awkwardness. The hands which could trim a vine or graft a rose with any one's found the processes of rubbing down horses or milking cows difficult and mysterious, and the brain which had readily enough mastered the intricacies attending the cultivation of hothouse plants found itself unequal in its present distraught condition to retain even the repeated injunctions of his master. The latter became more and more incensed

and contemptuous, and had it not been that, with all his seeming dulness, Dan was steady and trustworthy, and willing, moreover, to accept lower wages than Mr. Cassidy could hope to replace him for, the compact between them would have been speedily at an end. In the mean time, Esther had ample opportunities for studying the character of her master. Time often hung heavily enough on his hands, and as he had, necessarily, occasion frequently to cross the yard on which Esther's premises looked out, he gradually fell into a habit of loitering as he passed the kitchen or the dairy, and conversing freely with the younger of his handmaidens, particularly if Bridget's vocations took her elsewhere. To do the man justice, he had not the faintest notion of the wild hopes to which his demeanor gave rise, and neither did he know how great an injury he was thereby inflicting upon Dan. Esther had carefully kept her engagement secret both from him and her mistress, and there was certainly nothing

lover-like in her treatment of Dan on the rare occasions they met in their master's presence. On the other hand, she was most guarded in her behavior towards the latter, being too sharp not to realize how extremely precarious would be her position should the least inkling of her aspirations leak out. Mrs. Lyons, to begin with, would instantly get rid of her; every one in the place (unaware, as she told herself, of the grounds which she had for hope) would scorn and mock her, and Mr. Cassidy might, if his affections were tampered with before they were thoroughly ripe, be tempted to throw her over into the bargain. Esther's conduct, as a result of this astute reasoning, was in every respect admirable in its discretion; no one could have guessed her secret elation and delight. To Mrs. Lyons she appeared hard-working, biddable, and steady (though she made amends for the restraint she thus imposed on herself by wild plans of sending that lady about her business on some bright future day when

she should reign as mistress in her stead), while her fellow-servants, inside and out, were charmed by her liveliness and affability. Dan, however, was exempted from her favor; she now barely tolerated him at the best of times, while occasionally she regarded him with feelings little short of aversion. His love wearied her, his reproachful face irritated her, she found his presence nearly always unwelcome, and sometimes positively hateful; in fact, it was only for the motives of prudence aforesaid, and as an additional blind, that she permitted the engagement to continue.

Not Mrs. Lyons herself was more ignorant of the existing state of affairs than the luckless Dan. Even had Esther's behavior given him more reason to be suspicious, it would never have occurred to him to think that "the masther" could make so little of himself as to "take up" with her. It was a strange fact that Mrs. Green, a total outsider, should unconsciously have been the first to open his eyes.

Her well-known form appeared on the threshold one evening that he and his mother were sitting silent and disconsolate over their turf fire.

"God save all here!" she said. "Ay, I 'll step in, thank ye kindly, Mrs. Drennan; I 'll be glad to sit down a bit, for I 'm shakin' yit wid the fright himself 's afther givin' me."

"Oh, thin, God bless us! what happened him, at all?" asked Mrs. Drennan, less concerned, however, for the absent Mr. Green, than interested in the prospect of any sort of stir in the quiet neighborhood.

"He come runnin' an' shoutin' along the lane," pursued their visitor. "'Open the door,' he says, 'open the door quick, for Pether Daly 's afther me!' Heth, I let wan yell, I need n't tell ye, an' all the childher come runnin' an' bawlin'; an' afther all, sorra sight o' Pether was there at all. 'Why, ye 're daft,' I says, 'screechin' out that-away.' 'Oh, God help me,' says himself, 'I 'm ready to dhrop this minute! I

raly thought,' he says, 'Pether was goin' to murther me. I was passin' by Daly's,' he says, 'for a bit of a walk, an' just as I come along the door burst open,' he says, 'an' he lepped out on me, that wild lookin', I tuk to runnin' an' screechin',' he says, 'thinkin' he was afther me ivery fut o' the way.'"

"An' where, in the name o' God, was Esther?" asked Mrs. Drennan, as her neighbor paused for breath.

"Ay, I axed him that," returned Mrs. Green, "an' he says, 'Oh, she was there,' he says, 'talkin' to her masther over the hedge. I seen them, an' I comin' along, an' may be she thought she had Pether safe shut up.'"

"Ha! that lad 'll be doin' a mischief wan o' these days, I 'll be bound," interrupted Mrs. Drennan severely; "however, so long as he does n't come murtherin' me, I don't mind; but that 's what Dan 'ud be likin'. Wantin' to put him here to have me kilt intirely, not to spake o' the fright I 'd be in."

"Ay, indeed," assented Mrs. Green. "I wondher at ye, Dan, so I do; but indeed I'm niver done wondherin' at ye for wantin' to take up wid the likes of Esther herself, an' lavin' yer good place an' all. All the neighbors does be sayin' they can tell by the very ways of her she 's on'y makin' a fool of ye. 'Marry *Dan!*'— in shrill crescendo — 'is it Esther marry *Dan!* they do be tellin' me. Hothin, what a notion she has of it! Dan 's a great dale too quiet for her, an' ivery wan can see that, on'y himself.'"

"Troth, ye 're right there" — Mrs. Drennan was beginning, when Dan interrupted her irritably.

"Ah, whist, mother, in the name of God! An' I 'll thank ye, Mrs. Green, to mind yer own bus'ness an' not be comin' in here tattlin' an' mischief-makin'. I won't stand it no more, an' that 's all about it."

The two women gazed at him for a moment, amazed; never before had Dan appeared so angry or asserted himself with so much courage. But Mrs. Green was blessed

with a tongue that rarely stood her in default.

"Oh, Lord sakes!" she ejaculated. "Let me out o' this, Mrs. Drennan. I would n't stop another minute in it afther bein' insulted that-away. I 'umbly ax yer pardon, Misther Drennan, for forgettin' meself so far as to tell ye the trute" —

"It is n't the trute!" cried Dan hotly. "It 's nothin' but lies."

"Ay, av coorse we 're all liars here, yer mother an' all," retorted Mrs. Green, dropping an ironical curtsey. "We 're the rale bad wans, Mrs. Drennan — the eyes in our heads is lyin', an' we must n't dar' b'lieve our own ears. Sure, there 's no wan has a right to be b'lieved on'y Esther. Och, she 's the rale saint, so she is, she 'd shame an angel from heaven itself! I wish ye joy o' yer daughter-in-law, Mrs. Drennan, an' o' yer son, too."

After thus delivering herself, the indignant lady flounced round and retired from the field, leaving Dan to receive the re-

proaches of his parent with such patience as he possessed.

When these had at length been exhausted, and she also had withdrawn, Dan sat down on the edge of the bed and asked himself with some wonder how he had so far forgotten his customary forbearance as to lay himself open to such an attack. He soon abandoned this question for another as unanswerable, and which startled him even more.

"What in the world tuk the masther to Esther's that hour o' the evenin'?" It could not have been on a matter of business, as the girl passed the greater part of her life at the White House, and Mr. Cassidy had ample opportunities for imparting to her such commands as he might think fit; it would be absurd, on the other hand, to suppose that his master had gone all that way merely to chat with Esther, and still more improbable that he — such a great personage — should have been escorting her home.

"May be it was givin' her a message from Mrs. Lyons he was," mused Dan, "or he might have just been passin' that way an' stopped to spake to her — but it 's a quare thing!"

The fire had burned low, and having shivered outside his bed for some time longer, it suddenly struck Dan that he should be more comfortable within; he undressed accordingly, and crept beneath the blankets, but it was long before sleep came to him. When it did, it was accompanied by a very strange dream. He was standing, as it seemed to him, on a ladder in one of the hothouses at the Court, pruning a vine; the ground at his feet was green with the tender young shoots, and he could smell their sweet, slightly pungent odor. Presently he heard Esther's voice calling to him, and turning saw her looking up at him and smiling as she had been wont to smile in the first days of their courtship. "Come down, Dan," she said, "I want you." And then he was at her side; in a dream-ecstasy his

arm had stolen round her, his face was bent to hers, and she did not repulse him. But as in dreams the sweetest is ever withheld; the longed-for letter is received, it may be opened, but never *read;* the words that, sleeping or waking, we would give so much to hear, hover upon shadowy lips, but are never uttered; the form that is all in all to us is just distinguishable in the distance, but eludes us as we approach; so the loving kiss even of an unreal Esther was not for Dan. Just as he was stooping over her she started up, crying, "Save me, Dan, save me — here 's the masther!" Looking up in frantic, unreasoning dream-terror, he saw Mr. Cassidy approaching with swift steps and angry face. All in vain did Dan spring to the greenhouse door, locking and bolting it in feverish haste; after their manner in such visions, the sturdy deal was broken through like so much paper, the bolts and bars crumbled away, and with a scream the hapless Esther was seized and borne away in Cassidy's arms.

Dan awoke, bathed in perspiration, and with his heart thumping audibly against his ribs; the room was still quite dark and the night but little advanced, but there was no more sleep for him. The seed dropped so carelessly by Mrs. Green had shot up with the rapidity of Jack's beanstalk, towering above him and casting a baleful shadow over his hopes. One thought, and one alone, occupied him during the remainder of the night. If anything so wildly improbable were to come to pass as that Mr. Cassidy should take up with Esther, how could he, Dan, hope to compete with such a rival?

CHAPTER X.

AWAKENING.

With characteristic simplicity and imprudence, Dan sought Esther's presence as early as possible on the following morning. He was hungering for a word or a look that might seem to give the lie to the vexatious rumors which so troubled him, and it did not occur to him that he was acting unwisely in obtruding his presence at an unwonted hour on Esther, whose mood had for the last few days been even less gracious than usual.

He found her on her knees in the empty kitchen, scrubbing the flags. The exercise had flushed her cheeks with a lovely color, her curling hair, loosened a little from its coils, waved about her brow, and coquettishly nestling in the bosom of her pink jacket was a little bunch of snowdrops. She looked up as he entered, and her face darkened.

"Is that you?" she asked snappishly; "what brings ye here so airly?"

"Troth, I on'y peeped in to have a look at yerself," said Dan with affected cheerfulness, though his heart was in his mouth; "an' it 's yerself that 's a beautiful sight this fine mornin'."

"Ah, g'long out o' that!" retorted Esther, with a swift, unsmiling glance towards him. "Ye 're always in the way whin ye 're not wanted. I have me work to be thinkin' about, if you have none."

She fell to her scrubbing again with so much vigor that the little bunch of snowdrops dropped out of her dress into the middle of her suds. She hastily picked it up, shook it, and restored it to its place, whence, however, it was again dislodged in another moment.

"Ah, bad luck to it!" muttered Esther, tossing it over her shoulder and returning to her scrubbing with renewed energy.

"Ye might as well let me have them flowers for a remember of ye while I 'm

goin' about me work," insinuated Dan. "Give them to me, asthore — they'll be rale precious to me."

"Be off out o' me way," retorted Esther impatiently, "ye have me moithered, so ye have. No, I won't give them to ye — cockin' ye up wid flowers, indeed! I've somethin' betther to be thinkin' of."

She rose as she spoke, and with a thrust of her vigorous arm pushed Dan outside the door, which she slammed to in so uncompromising a fashion that he had not the courage to renew the attack.

He betook himself sorrowfully to the cow-house, where his master found him a little later leaning over the half-door, lost in gloomy thought.

"What are you about, lazy-bones?" shouted Mr. Cassidy angrily. "Have you nothing better to do than to stand gaping about here?"

Dan started and looked hastily round, descrying in an instant something which gave him much more concern than his

master's angry face or bullying manner. Lo! peeping out of the latter's buttonhole was the very bunch of snowdrops which had been denied to him. He could have sworn to their identity, even if they had not, as it seemed to him, still glistened with soapsuds, and were not kept together by the untidy remnant of pinkish string which he had noticed in Esther's hands, and one end of which now strayed out from behind the coat-lappet of their new possessor.

A little later, looking in at the kitchen window, he ascertained that Esther's nosegay *had* certainly vanished, and therefore was reluctantly obliged to believe on the evidence of his own eyes that which he would have doubted had any less credible witnesses asserted it.

"Esther, alanna," he said huskily, "I 'm sure ye 've changed yer mind since mornin'. I see ye 're not wearin' them little snowdrops now. I 've tuk such a fancy to them, I 'm loath they should be thrown away. What did ye do with them, asthore?"

Esther turned round sharply, gazed at him for a moment, and then — *lied*, as was her custom in all such emergencies.

"Thrown them into the fire," she said indifferently. "I seen the masther goin' by wid some rale beauties in his coat, an', says I, I 'll not wear them soapy things no more afther seeing the likes o' them."

Dan was not in the least taken in; for a moment he found it hard to resist the impulse to tell her so, and to challenge her boldly to declare her real mind and thus put him out of his misery. But he was withheld now, as he had been so often before, by the might of his extraordinary love. He had staked his all, and though despair was in his heart, like a very gambler that he was, he could not bring himself to withdraw even yet from the fatal game. So, manly honor, and even self-respect, were thrown down to share the same fate as the hope and love that were lost forever.

The next few days he lived, as it were, in a dream of misery — I say a dream, be-

cause he was lost to all sense of ordinary things, and spoke and moved, as it were, unconsciously; but in some ways he was preternaturally wide-awake. He dogged Esther's steps in a manner which nearly drove her frantic, and lost no word or look either of hers or her master's which might seem to confirm his fears. These were not wanting, — sometimes he asked himself, in his torture, how he could have been so blind as not to have seen before who it was that had come between him and his love. A gathering resentment was in his mind, not against Esther, who, could he but have seen it, was the more guilty of the two, but against Cassidy, who had, as he thought, enticed her affections away from him.

"Why could n't he have let her alone?" he said to himself fiercely; "she was fond enough o' me, an' plased enough to have me, before he come afther her. How could a poor fella like meself have a chance when a gintleman's to the fore?"

So his indignation smouldered and grew

beneath his apparent sullen apathy, and was many a time ready to blaze forth when Cassidy rated and gibed at him.

At last matters reached a climax, but with disastrous results. He came to the kitchen one morning on some pretext or another, merely for the excuse to look at or speak to Esther. It was ironing-day, and the latter was sprinkling and folding a huge basket of clothes, while the irons were heating between the bars of the grate. Mrs. Lyons was suffering from one of the periodical headaches which freed her grateful household from her presence during the course of an entire day; and Bridget was pursuing the mysteries of "clear-starching" in the wash-house on the other side of the yard. The road being thus clear, Mr. Cassidy, who had stepped in ostensibly to give some directions relative to housekeeping in the absence of his sister, saw no reason why he should hurry away from the companionship of his lively and attractive servant. As Dan entered, therefore, he descried his

master seated on the table, and pretending, with noisy laughter, to help Esther to fold one of his own shirts. Their mirth was suddenly checked as Dan advanced into the room, his face aflame, his eyes flashing, his expression denoting unutterable anger and disgust.

Mr. Cassidy descended from the table, angry too, and a little ashamed at being thus "caught" by his serving-man.

"What brings you here?" he cried harshly; "and have you no better manners, you fool, than to come into a gentleman's house with your hat on?"

He raised his stick as he spoke, and, with a dexterous flourish, sent the offending hat whirling across the room, at which feat Esther laughed loudly. This was the last drop in the already full cup of poor Dan's wrongs; there was a limit even to his endurance, and before the astonished Cassidy could realize his intentions, he had wrested the stick from the latter's hand and struck at him with all his might. Cassidy was not

the man to submit tamely to such treatment. As soon as he recovered from his amazement he gripped Dan's collar, dragged him into the yard, and there and then proceeded to "pay him out," much to the edification of Esther and such of the farm laborers as were near enough to hear and witness the altercation.

Dan fought his very best, the frenzy within him lending him a strength which at other times he did not possess; but he had as much chance of conquering his master as a terrier would have of getting the better of a mastiff. The superior size and weight of his opponent soon told against him, and after a sharp struggle, the former regained possession of his stick, and proceeded to thrash him unmercifully, flinging him from him, in the end, upon the uneven cobble-stones in the yard. Then, looking down on him in fierce triumph, Cassidy kicked the prostrate form, — a brutal act, typical of the coarse and cowardly nature of the man; yet Esther, far from being revolted by it, looked on and applauded.

"That 's it," she cried, clapping her hands; her cheeks were flushed, and an ugly, vindictive glitter was in her eyes. "Give it to him, yer honor. That 'll tache him not to be so impudent, — the ruffian."

"You 'd better see to him, some of you," cried Cassidy, glancing somewhat uneasily at Dan's perfectly motionless form and closed eyes; turning on his heel after a moment, however, he went into the house, followed by Esther.

As the door closed behind them, one of the men went up to Dan and bent over him.

"He looks bad," he said; "bring a sup o' wather will ye, — that 's a good lad?" addressing the youngest amongst them. "What in the world tuk him to go fightin' the masther?"

"Ay, an' him that 'ud make two of him, anny day," returned another. "I niver thought Dan 'ud be such a fool!"

The boy soon returned with some water, and his fellow-laborers, raising Dan's head, endeavored, with some compassion and more

contempt, to restore him to consciousness. To be a popular hero, something more is required than mere courage and daring; success is, above all, indispensable. To fight a man of three times your strength and double your size, and to be beaten by him, is no more heroic in the eyes of the world than to wage any other warfare against overwhelming odds, and to fail. On the other hand, should you, by some lucky "fluke" (to borrow an expressive if unclassical term) chance to come out victorious in the unequal strife, it is quite another thing; you speedily find yourself high in the popular favor, and a very great personage indeed.

If David's hand had not been divinely guided, if the pebble had whizzed harmlessly past the giant's head, and the latter had promptly disposed of the venturesome shepherd lad, his praises would never have been sung, and Saul's jealousy never aroused. The very same motives deemed so great and noble and virtuous in the successful man are absurd and wicked in him who fails; we cry

up the one as a hero, but we dub the other a fool.

In course of time Dan returned to consciousness and was assisted home, where his mother received him with loud lamentations. Great was her astonishment to hear the account which his conductors gave of the morning's occurrence, and though most of her indignation was poured forth on Cassidy, a share of it descended on her son for the foolhardiness which had provoked such wrath. Dan himself could not be brought to assign any motive for his conduct beyond the fact that he could no longer submit to Cassidy's ill-treatment; he obstinately refused to descend to particulars, and his mother, whose affection for him, despite her occasional severity, was great, had pity on his forlorn condition and forbore to press him further.

Towards dusk, as he sat by the fire all alone, — Mrs. Drennan having slipped out to relieve her mind to some of her neighbors, — sick and sore in body, dazed in mind, and clearly conscious of nothing but intense

wretchedness and humiliation, a figure crossed the threshold and Esther's voice broke the stillness.

"Dan Drennan," she said, in harsh tones, as she approached the settle on which he sat, "I 'm sent by Misther Cassidy to pay your wages, an' to tell ye, ye need n't be goin' to work undher him no more. He bid me tell ye, ye might thank him for not sendin' ye to jail as it is — an' he s'poses ye won't be expectin' him to giv' ye a c'racther, for he 'd be long sorry to own he iver had such a mad fool in his sarvice."

There was a ring of triumph in her voice, a glee in repeating the insulting words, which Dan found hard to bear. She obviously rejoiced in being the emissary of these tidings, though in truth Cassidy had only selected her to deliver them as being the first person at hand, and living in the neighborhood.

"Thank ye, Esther," cried Dan, with such spirit as remained to him; "ye may tell Misther Cassidy that I had no intintion o' doin'

another han's turn for him, an' that whin I ax him for a c'racther it 'll be time enough for him to think o' whether he 'll give it or no."

Esther was a little taken aback by his tone; she threw down the money at his feet, however, and gazed at him insolently.

"Ye 're a fine sight!" she said, after a pause. "Heth, the masther settled ye gran'. I wondher ye are n't ashamed to show yer face, afther the thrashin' ye 're afther gettin' — I 've more to say to ye nor that, though. I 've something to tell ye more nor Misther Cassidy's message. I have to say, Dan Drennan, that all 's over between you an' me. I 've put up wid ye too long, so I have, an' I 'm sick o' the very sight o' ye. D' ye *hear?*" she said viciously, shaking his arm as he glanced up with so strange an expression that she doubted if he comprehended her meaning.

"Oh, Esther, whisht for the love o' God!" cried Dan, standing up suddenly before her, his form swaying, partly from weakness,

partly from the violence of his emotion. "Esther, I know — I know why ye want to get shut o' me, an' what's more, that is what druv me to go fightin' that man this mornin' — ay, an' I'd do it agin. Ye need n't be castin' it up at me, for it's him that 's in the wrong. But he 'll niver love ye like me. I can tell ye that. Ay," cried poor Dan wildly, "an' may be ye 'll rue the day yet he taught ye to play me such a thrick."

"Hould your tongue!" cried Esther, flushing a deep red, and turning on him with flashing eyes. "Is it threatenin' me ye are, ye ruffian?"

"Oh, God bless us — threatenin'!" repeated Dan, softening all at once, overcome by the imputation, which indeed was ill-deserved. "D' ye think I 'd threaten ye, asthore? I 'm on'y manin' that he 's not o' yer station, an' that such goin's on 'll niver make ye happy. An' he 'll niver, niver love ye like me — he could n't "—

"How dar' ye be talkin' that-away?"

she interrupted fiercely. "I 'll never be yer wife — not if ye were to ax me for a hunderd years together. I 'd be ashamed to think I b'longed to a fella like ye — d' ye hear? — not if there was ne'er another man in the world. I 've done wid ye now for good, an' ye need niver think I 'll go back on me word."

Her voice was hard, and her face set in stern determination; she meant what she said; the events of the morning had weighed down the scale, and not even the prudence and cunning which had hitherto forced her to tolerate him sufficed to counterbalance them.

Dan listened in a strange tumult of passion, indignation, and anguish; the longing to give utterance to the storm of reproaches which rose to his lips was overmastered by his overwhelming grief. He tried to speak, but could not; weak and dizzy, he made a step forward, just as Esther prepared to leave the cottage, staggered after her, and fell on his knees, clutching at her dress in

mute appeal. But she jerked her skirts away from him without a word, and when Mrs. Drennan returned, after a prolonged absence, she found him lying on the floor almost as one dead.

CHAPTER XI.

IN TRIBULATION.

It was fair day at Martinstown, and the one street of that important commercial centre presented an unusually festive appearance. Droves of sheep and cattle threaded their way through the booths where sundry venders of cakes and sweets displayed their tempting wares; horses were in the minority, but pigs and chickens were well to the fore. Many of the principal inhabitants turned out in holiday attire to converse with their acquaintances; shopkeepers, standing at their respective doors, congratulated each other across the street on the fact of "town" being so full; and the penetrating voice of an old beggar-woman, who was seated on the doorstep of a public house, dominated the general din, assuring the passers-by that "poor ould Rose was a dacent, respectable

woman, — quiet and sober, a good, poor ould crathur," and in fact in every way deserving of recognition.

Mrs. Drennan was laden with a huge basket, in which several fat chickens were arranged in layers, the struggles of the undermost provoking every now and then a reproachful protest from their owner in the midst of the flood of lamentations she was pouring forth into the sympathetic ear of her next neighbor.

Presently she broke off, suddenly descrying Father Duffy's tall form making its way down the narrow street. A smile broke over every face as he passed; little barefooted children pattered in his wake, the fleeter somewhat retarding his progress by thrusting themselves in front of him, the better to display their proficiency in the art of dropping a curtsey or pulling a forelock. Such tokens of respect were not confined to these small fry; the landlord of the "hotel," who would hardly have noticed Father Duffy's parents, — struggling shopkeepers of

the town, — doffed his hat reverently to the priest; old men and women, who well remembered "little Mickey Duffy" scampering about the streets in days of yore, and who could, moreover, tell various tales of the boxes on the ear, or even "leatherings," which his mischievous pranks had earned at their hands, drew aside reverently to let him pass, beaming with pride and pleasure on receiving a word or a smile; even the ancient pedagogue, who had first initiated him into the mysteries of the alphabet, stood bareheaded to crave his blessing.

"That 's his riverence, thank God!" cried Mrs. Drennan; "I 'll run across and spake to him about Dan. May be he 'll say a word to him himself."

She hurried forward, coming into violent collision with "dacent, respectable, ould Rose," who had managed to turn an honest penny a few minutes previously, by making her nose and chin meet at the request of a facetious drover, and who now emerged from the public house where she had originally

installed herself, wiping her lips, and announcing somewhat superfluously that "no wan could tell the comforth of a sup o' could wather, on'y them that was dhry." Catching sight of her parish priest, however, she made off at full speed; for he had the reputation of being "the rale wicked man" on occasion, and Rose did not care to meet him just then.

"Is that you, Mrs. Drennan?" said the priest kindly. "I was just on my way to see you and Dan. What is this I hear about him?"

"Och, sure, they have desthroyed him on me entirely, yer riverence," returned Mrs. Drennan, bursting into tears; "he 's near out of his mind these two days; an' as to atin', he won't so much as swalley a cup o' tay. Ah, ye bould, noisy thing ye," viciously addressing a particularly clamorous young cockerel whose beak protruded from amidst the chaos of fluttering wings in the basket. "I 'll bid whoever buys ye kill an' ait ye at wanst, so I will. I can't hear mesilf spake

wid yer screechin'. Ay, Father, Dan has me heart broke entirely, an' not a word can I get out of him at all to know what it is he 's frettin' about. I was just goin' to ax ye if ye 'd go see him. May be he 'd tell you. As to what he done beyant " — dropping her voice to a mysterious whisper, and jerking her thumb over her shoulder to indicate Cassidy's house, — " did ye ever hear the like? I dunno raly what come over him at all."

" Well, well, I 'll go and keep him company till you have got rid of these troublesome chickens of yours, Mrs. Drennan. Don't hurry back; I 've nothing particular to do this morning, and can sit with him for some time."

In another half-hour Father Duffy was installed in the solitary high-backed armchair which Mrs. Drennan possessed, and was gravely considering her son. The alteration in Dan's countenance shocked him; he might have just arisen from a severe illness, so sharpened and drawn were

his features; but the sufferings of which the traces were plainly visible would have been quickly defined as mental by the quick-sighted priest, even had he not been able to form a shrewd guess as to their cause.

After the exchange of a few commonplaces, during which Dan's eyes every now and then were raised timidly to his visitor's face, and then quickly averted, Father Duffy leaned towards him and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Tell me, Dan," he said kindly, "what is it that troubles you?"

Dan looked up nervously, and meeting the eyes bent so compassionately on him, paled suddenly, and his lips quivered.

"She won't have me, Father," he said, in a broken voice, "she won't have anythin' more to say to me; she come here the other night an' tould me to me face that she was sick o' the very sight o' me, an' — oh, God in Heaven! — I dunno how to bear it."

The priest was silent, but the kind hand

stroked Dan's shoulder as tenderly as a woman's could have done, and encouraged him to proceed.

"It's what I dhreaded all along, ye remember, Father," pursued the lad, who, now that his reserve was broken, felt it a relief to pour forth what was in his heart; "but I thought it niver could raly happen, bekase I loved her so much an' so true, I thought she'd *have* to love me agin in the end. An' I prayed so hard, Father, I didn't think God himself 'ud have the heart to deny me — just the wan on'y thin' I axed for, an' what was more to me nor to anny other man. No wan — I don't care who it is," he cried, passionately, "could iver love her like me; an' why would n't the Lord turn her heart to me — Him that made it? That's what I do be sayin' to meself sometimes, an' it comes up in me heart an' chokes the prayer off of me lips."

He looked appealingly in Father Duffy's face, and saw to his surprise a mist as of tears in his eyes.

"Oh, my poor lad," he said, tenderly, "you are not the first to wonder why the one thing we crave for should be of all others what God should see fit to deny. But remember, whatever God does is done in *love*, — remember that, Dan. Did He not love his only Son, and yet did He grant Him even the comfort of human sympathy in his agony? He sent Him an angel, but Christ had not asked for an angel; his man's heart wanted *man's* love, and sympathy, and compassion."

"Ay," said Dan, following out the priest's train of thought with that intuitive appreciation of all that touches the mystic and supernatural which the most uneducated of his country folk possess. "Ay, Father," he sighed resignedly; but his countenance did not clear. "But spakin' o' meself, I just feel as if I could n't go on livin' afther this. If I could pray right, I 'd pray to die, an' may be the Lord 'ud hear me this time. Sure there was n't a thought, wakin' or sleepin', that I had at all that was n't about Esther;

an' no matther how unhappy she made me, there was like somethin' that used to be tellin' me that all 'ud come right in the end. That 's what I do be feelin' now, yer riverence. I feel I *can't* give her up — I feel as if I could n't live, an' know she is n't to be for me. I can't face me life without her at all, so I can't!"

"Why, Dan, be a man!" said the priest, forcing a laugh, and endeavoring to rally him out of his depression. "You must n't talk like that. It seems very hard now, but in time, you know, you 'll" — He paused, glanced a moment into Dan's face, and then added gravely, "God will know how to comfort you."

He had been about to say "in time you 'll get over it," but had altered his phrase on reflection, feeling that Dan's grief was not of the kind that brooks such consolation. There is no such cruel mockery as that which would fain console one in overwhelming sorrow with the suggestion that time will remove it. One might as well — or, indeed,

far more suitably — attempt to comfort a man in the agonies of toothache by the assurance that some day when he is old and decrepit the cause of his torture will probably drop out. Who is it, capable of really deep emotion, that in moments of supreme grief can look forward with equanimity to the prospect of feeling being blunted, the fickleness of human nature asserting itself, memory itself being dulled beneath the hand of time? Our hearts, frail and inconstant though they be, revolt at the idea. "No," they cry out, passionately, "a thousand times no! Love and hope are gone; do not dare to rob us of our sorrow. If joy perishes in a day, let us at least believe that grief will be eternal!"

Father Duffy, delicate and sympathetic in the best rendering of the words, realized the strength of Dan's love and sorrow too fully to utter any word that might jar upon him. He began to preach to him instead — a kindly, affectionate, simple little homily, readily understood by the hearer and addressed rather to his heart than to his head.

"It will only be for a little while, Dan," said Father Duffy, warming with his subject, "and after all what does it matter, when we know that God is with us and Heaven is above?"

Dan for his part felt that it *did* matter a great deal, and he gazed at the priest's inspired face with wonder and a little envy. Now and then, as we toil through life, we see certain travellers resting, as it seems to us, on the mountain-tops, high above our heads. In vain do they tempt us to join them on those heights, where they tell us the air is so pure and the heavens seem so near. To us the ascent seems too arduous, the effort too great; we think it cruel that they should bid us attempt it. They themselves, we say, were probably borne aloft by those impetuous spirits of theirs, and passed unscathed over the thorns that would tear and wound us, the stones amid which we should stumble and fall. And yet, who knows that if we sought for them, we should not find in the roughest and steepest part of

the ascent shreds of torn raiment clinging to the brambles, and blood-stained footprints of these our brethren who have suffered and striven even like to us?

Dan sighed heavily.

"Ah, Father, it's well to be you," he said; "but we can't all feel that way."

"Well, Dan," said the priest cheerily, "we must all do our best. You must do your best now, and bear your trouble bravely. You will have to go to your work again soon, you know. By the way, you are not working at the White House any more, I hear," he added carelessly; "you and Mr. Cassidy have fallen out. Why was that?"

Dan was silent for a moment, and then said:—

"I 'd rather not tell ye, Father. He was hard on me in manny ways, an'— If ye plase, don't ax me to say anny more. An' I was going to ax ye too, yer riverence, if ye 'd kindly not be telling annybody what I 'm afther sayin' about me an Esther. My mother alone 'ud be always at me, an' so

would the neighbors, an' I could n't bear them to be runnin' her down. It is n't altogether her doin', an' — Sure annyway she was right, I s'pose, to look higher nor me."

"I 'll promise what you like," returned Father Duffy, who drew his own conclusions, and mentally resolved to look after Miss Esther; "if you 'll promise *me* to be a man, and try to think no more of that girl."

Dan looked up and smiled an indescribably pathetic smile, which told more plainly than words how impossible it would be for him to comply with this request. The priest did not press him farther.

"I should like to hear a little more of your dispute with Mr. Cassidy," he said somewhat gravely, after a pause. "Is it true that you struck your master first?"

Dan nodded, an unwontedly dark expression overcasting his open face.

"Ay, I did," he said, after a pause. "I felt for the minute, to tell ye the thrute, yer riverence, as if I could be the death of him. Even this minute" —

He paused, and drew his hand across his brow. "Even this minute I feel as if I 'd give the world to be as sthrong as him, an' able to give him as good as he gev me. No, Father, I don't altogether mane that; on'y at times whin I think o' that man, it seems as if it was n't meself was in it at all."

He looked deprecatingly at Father Duffy, who, however, was too well acquainted with the dark as well as the bright side of human nature to seem shocked or astonished, though he had not in truth expected such a speech from the usually meek and patient Dan. He only spoke a few words in answer, but these produced their effect, and Dan hung his head in some shame at his recent outburst.

The priest withdrew shortly after this, cogitating deeply, his kindly heart almost as heavy as Dan's own, out of sheer sympathy.

"Of course it is easy to see how the land lies," he mused to himself, "and who is Dan's rival. Poor simple fellow! How

close he thought he kept his secret, when every word betrayed it. The delicacy of that ignorant lad! Not to excuse himself fifty times over would he breathe a syllable that might seem to cast a slur on that girl."

CHAPTER XII.

"THE FEAST OF REASON AND THE FLOW OF SOUL."

ALL was fuss and bustle in the White House; there was "company" expected to dinner, and the whole establishment was turned upside down in preparation for the entertainment. The first thing to be done on such occasions by a person of Mrs. Lyons' character is obviously to set the servants by the ears, — a feat which the mistress of the White House succeeded in accomplishing at a very early hour of the day. She roamed about the house in her fawn-colored garment, with her curl-papers very tight, and her nose very red and pinched-looking; she drew her fingers along window-ledges and turned up carpets in search of dust, discovered cracks and breakages innumerable in the crockery, while

certain gimcracks, of the very existence of which her handmaidens were hitherto ignorant, were suddenly declared to be missing. It was in the kitchen, however, that her superabundant energy displayed itself to the greatest advantage, and after "murtherin'" Bridget on one pretext or another several times in a few hours, that ancient and somewhat irascible damsel would stand it no longer, and walked off in dudgeon to her relations in Martinstown. Here was a pretty kettle of fish! Bridget had had recourse to this expedient once or twice before when her patience was too severely tried, but never on such an occasion as this. What was to be done? Mrs. Lyons cast herself down on a kitchen chair and wept aloud. It was now two o'clock, and the expected guests were to arrive at five; one of their number was a very genteel person, the widow of a Methodist parson, who had recently come to reside in the neighborhood, and whom Mrs Lyons was particularly anxious to impress.

Only Esther, a girl who a few months before had been exclusively employed in outdoor labor, to act as cook, parlor-maid, and general factotum at an entertainment by which Mrs. Lyons had intended to dazzle her neighbors! Abject failure stared her in the face.

She sobbed frantically for some time, but at last, wiping her eyes, shrieked for Esther solely for the purpose of venting her spite on somebody. The latter came clattering down the stairs in her great hob-nailed Sunday boots, and approached her mistress somewhat sullenly. She too had had a hard time of it all day, and had it not been for the strong motives which urged her to self-control, would have been unable to restrain her naturally hot temper. The look on her face even now was such as to warn Mrs. Lyons that she had better be civil if she wished her to prove equal to this emergency, and accordingly it was more in sorrow than in anger that she poured forth the story of her woes. Esther's face changed at

once, and was overspread by an animated, not to say gleeful expression; partly caused by the natural excitement of the thing, and partly by the sense of her own importance.

"Troth, ma'am, we 'll manage it between us," she cried good-humoredly; "sure we 've three hours before us yit," — glancing at the clock, — "it 's on'y the cookin' that 'ud bother me. I can do the potatoes gran,' an' bile the ham; but them chickens an' the beef 'ud be beyant me intirely, not to mintion the apple-pie."

Mrs. Lyons groaned.

"I could direct you, girl," she said faintly, "and I suppose I 'd have to try and help you too." Mrs. Lyons had already on several occasions "given a hand" with the cooking, but she had always done so under protest, and impressed on her subordinates that it was an occupation to which she was by no means accustomed.

The two thereupon set to work with a will, for there was no time to be lost; and by half past four Mrs. Lyons had the satis-

faction of knowing that all the viands were in process of preparation; the cloth had been laid, Esther had been drilled, and, moreover, had proved herself an apt scholar. Nothing now remained but for the mistress to assume her best attire, and the maid to "clane herself" as well as she could, keeping a sharp lookout on her various pots and pans meanwhile.

In another quarter of an hour, Mrs. Lyons, resplendent in the crimson silk, with necklace and earrings of garnets, was seated in her "drawin'-room," the only trace of her previous exertions being an unusual flush on her expressive countenance; and the company had begun to arrive.

There were four guests expected; besides the relict of the minister, Mrs. Lyons had invited the Martinstown attorney, and a retired dispensary doctor and his daughter from the same place.

The first to put in an appearance was the lawyer; a quiet, easy-going man with a pursy under lip and a fat laugh, who en-

joyed other people's jokes amazingly, and never attempted to make any of his own.

Doctor Mooney and his daughter arrived almost at the same time; but *the* guest of the evening, whom the others had been invited to meet and of whom all stood equally in awe, was fashionably late, and it was quite ten minutes past five by the time her hired covered car drove up to the door. Mrs. Lyons (all smiles and gentility) escorted the ladies to her own apartment, and while they divested themselves of their bonnets and shook out their finery before the glass, she flew downstairs again to see how Esther was getting on with the "dishing-up."

She found that damsel with a black smear adorning her recently-washed face, and her smart cap all awry on her curly locks, wrestling with a huge piece of stewed beef which she was endeavoring to extract from the big black pot she held in her left hand, and which slipped off the fork as often as it approached the edge.

"I 've done all on'y this, ma'am," she

cried excitedly; "all 's on the parlor table, and looks iligant; but this fella — ah, bad scran to it! — slips out o' me hand as fast as I git a hoult of it."

Mrs. Lyons seized a fork, and by dint of their united exertions the *pièce de resistance* was safely landed on the dish. This done, and remembering that her guests upstairs would probably have finished their toilette, she was scuttling off again at full speed when a sudden thought struck her.

"Mind you wash your face and make yourself decent, Esther, before you ring the bell — and *mind*, whatever you do, you must n't attempt to go home before I give you leave. I don't know what I might be wanting, and must have you at hand."

"Laws, ma'am, could n't I just run home an' give the poor boy a bit an' get his bed ready for him?"

"If you do," cried Mrs. Lyons excitedly, "it 'll be as much as your place is worth. *Mind*, now!" She stamped her foot, frowned portentously, and was gone.

For a moment Esther's temper almost got the better of her; however, she had no time to give way to it, and, vexed as she was at first at being obliged to leave poor Peter in the lurch, she was soon too busy and too much excited to think further about him.

Her eyes sparkled as she took up her stand at the parlor door and watched the company file in to dinner arm in arm. First, as in due form, Mr. Cassidy, leading Mrs. Patterson, the preacher's lady, — a portly dame with sandy hair and fishy blue eyes, and a manner, the loftiness of which was accounted for, now by a certain piously regretful expression as of one for whom the vanities of the world were things of the past, and now by an ill-repressed supercilliousness, as though, even were such not the case, she would certainly disdain her present company.

Next came Mr. Condron the lawyer, escorting Miss Mooney, an artless damsel of about forty-five, who called her father "p'pah," and was wont to be very arch in

the company of "gentlemen;" and finally, Mrs. Lyons herself, bringing up the rear with Dr. Mooney.

Esther, washed and tidy, and looking unusually pretty, removed the covers and revealed the glories of the repast with a certain triumph. The stewed beef was opposite Mr. Cassidy, while Mrs. Lyons prepared to carve a couple of large fowls with sharply accentuated breast-bones, and drumsticks widely extended as though in rapturous greeting. On one side of the table a dish of potatoes "in their jackets" was tastefully disposed at right angles with a massive cauliflower; while on the other was set forth a ham of lordly size but somewhat pallid complexion, and with its unhealthy appearance increased by an eruption of bread-crumbs.

The conversation was at first confined to the ladies of the party, Mr. Cassidy being occupied in carving, and the other two gentlemen feeling somewhat overcome by the magnificence of the entertainment.

Somebody asked Mrs. Patterson if she did not feel it a great change to live in the country instead of the town in the neighboring country whence she came.

"Everything seems so awkward, you know at first," explained Miss Mooney, "when you 're used to a town. One finds it so odd not to be able to send out for any little thing one wants. I remember when p'pah and I first came from Martinstown, I was always forgetting that, and it was so *very* awkward. One evening we had n't anny oil for the lamps," — giggling pleasantly, — "and there, if you please, was our great dawk dining-room all lighted with *dips*."

Everybody appreciated this anecdote mightily with the exception of the lady for whose special benefit it was related, who, half closing her eyes, sighed, as she remarked that it was n't the absence of such trivial matters as groceries, but rather the dearth of society that she regretted in that rural neighborhood.

"Ah, society!" ejaculated Mrs. Lyons, dropping her carving-knife and fork, that she might uplift her hands. "What is life without society? I often and often used to say that to poor Mr. Lyons when we were living in Dublin, and he used to say to me, 'Why, Maria,' he used to say, 'I do believe you were really *made* for society!'"

This assertion was cordially endorsed by Miss Mooney, who observed that she was quite sure Mrs. Lyons was indeed, of all women, best calculated to shine in the gay world. The gratified smirk which overspread the latter's countenance at the delicate compliment vanished at the unresponsive expression of Mrs. Patterson's face. This lady had now relapsed into her sanctified mood, which was rather unhandsome of her, considering the pains with which the rest of the company were endeavoring to bring themselves up to her social standpoint.

"Ah!" sighed the hostess, suddenly becoming grave, "all such things are past

and gone for me now. I 've left off caring for the world, and, indeed, have better things to be thinking about, these times."

She looked to Mrs. Patterson for approval, which she was conscious of deserving now, at all events, and was as much surprised as shocked at the stony displeasure with which her remark was received. In truth, this new departure was considered by the distinguished guest to be an unjustifiable assumption of her particular rights; the position to which the relict of the late Mr. Patterson felt herself to be entitled was surely untenable by a farmer's sister and a mere lay-woman to boot.

Esther, in the meantime, standing behind her mistress's chair, was gazing on the company with all her eyes, and criticising them with her usual astuteness. Mrs. Lyons, she decided, looked "rale or'nary" for all her finery; Miss Mooney was "a caution;" but Mrs. Patterson impressed her as a very superior personage indeed.

The girl comported herself creditably in

the performance of her new duties, only once forgetting her mistress's instructions so far as to laugh over a joke of Dr. Mooney's. It must be owned, however, that such a digression was excusable under the circumstances.

The doctor enjoyed the reputation of a humorist, and was particularly anxious to keep up his character on this occasion. As soon, therefore, as he had somewhat overcome his awe of his neighbor, Mrs. Patterson, he proceeded to enliven the conversation by uttering a series of rather broad witticisms which he enjoyed amazingly, but which the rest of the party received in a deprecating spirit, out of compliment to the distinguished and unsmiling guest.

It so happened, then, that Dr. Mooney, being a little short-sighted, and very much taken up with his own wit, was carving the ham in a rather careless fashion, and, his knife chancing to glance off all at once against his fork, sent a genteel little

shaving of ham right into the lap of his right-hand neighbor, Mrs. Patterson herself.

"Oh, take care!" cried the lady in tones of anguish, for though above the vanities of the world, she considered it a duty to take care of her best black silk dress.

The doctor was abashed for the moment, but soon rose to the emergency: —

"Bedad, ma'am," he cried, winking humorously, as he dived after the offending morsel with his fork, "ye called out too late that time, as the Connaught man said when the egg he was eatin' turned out to be a chicken."

It was at this exquisite jest that Esther, unable to restrain herself, burst into a delighted cackle, which she endeavored very inefficiently to convert into a cough, on meeting the severe gaze of her mistress.

"Here it is," cried Dr. Mooney, triumphantly brandishing his fork aloft. "Has it greased your gown? Allow me, ma'am," and he pulled out his red cotton

handkerchief and polished vigorously at the injured garment. But his attentions were not received with gratitude. The lady drew away her skirts with an expression of intense disgust, which was immediately reflected on the countenances of both host and hostess, and which filled poor Miss Mooney with confusion. Only Mr. Condron retained his self-possession, and, uplifting his voice for the first time, remarked that he thought they were going to have fine weather.

"I'm sure that will be a comfort," returned Mr. Cassidy, glad of a diversion. "It is wanted badly; in fact, if we have many years like last, the country will be ruined entirely."

"Ay, last year was a terrible year, — a terrible one indeed," chimed in the irrepressible doctor. "The people were at their wits' end altogether. I remember one poor fellow that I used to see every day tryin' to save his hay. He 'd shake it out, and turn it as soon as ever the sun

shone; and as sure as he had the whole field spread out, it 'ud come on to rain again. Well, this went on for a long while, and at last one day that I was passin' by, I saw him standin' in the middle of the field with the rain comin' down in torrents on him. He looked at his hay, and then he looked up at the sky, and then he took off his hat and began to curse and to swear into it at a fine rate. And when he had the full of his hat of curses, he laid it down on the grass. 'Rain away now,' says he, 'it's manure I want! It 's manure I want!' he says — ha! ha! ha!"

"Haw! haw!" came from the lawyer, and even Mr. Cassidy was unable to restrain his mirth; but Mrs. Patterson looked round the table with a horrified expression, and almost rose from her chair. This was really too much; the tone of conversation was not only vulgar, but positively improper; she doubted if she should continue to countenance it by her presence.

"Really, p'pah," cried Miss Mooney, al-

most in tears, "I think you forget where you are. Such jokes may be all very well for gentlemen, but they 're not the style ladies are used to."

"Is that so?" laughed her father good-humoredly. "Bedad, if that 's the case, I 'll have to look out some different ones — mild cured, that 's what you 're used to in this home eh, Cassidy?" facetiously alluding to the profession of that gentleman's paternal grandfather. "Well, will I tell ye about" —

"Doctor, a glass of wine with you," said the host hastily, while Mrs. Lyons created a diversion on her part by ordering Esther to fetch the second course.

But Mrs. Patterson's appetite was gone; neither the solid white tower of rice, made rather with a view to stability than to toothsomeness, nor the hot apple tart, in the recesses of which a broken tea-cup was deftly hidden to support the crust, nor the fruit, nor even the mixed biscuits could tempt her, it appeared. She responded in the negative to all Mrs. Lyons' persuasions, closing her eyes

and uplifting her hand as she murmured that she had had "quite sufficient, thank you," in a manner which was decidedly disheartening.

The ladies adjourned, therefore, in a very short time to the best parlor, while the gentlemen, relieved from the restraint of their presence, began to enjoy themselves in good earnest. A fragrant steam presently pervaded the apartment, issuing from a decoction at which Dr. Mooney was considered an adept, and after the consumption of which he himself fell fast asleep on rejoining the ladies, while Mr. Condron was so far exhilarated as to inaugurate a flirtation with Miss Mooney. Mrs. Patterson was thus left entirely on the hands of her host and hostess, who racked their brains in vain in the hopes of finding some subject which might not be displeasing to her.

Every one rejoiced more or less when nine o'clock came, and the doctor, waking up with a start, remarked that he thought it was time to be going. Shortly afterwards his conveyance came to the door, and the lawyer rose

also and prepared to depart with them; but even Mrs. Lyons' hospitable heart sank within her as Mrs. Patterson observed that she had ordered her covered car from Martinstown to return for her at ten. She was not accustomed to country ways, she explained, and had not thought of fixing an earlier hour.

"Ye won't catch *me* going in there again," observed Mr. Cassidy, as he handed Miss Mooney into her father's covered car. "I've had enough of that lady for one while."

"Oh, you're very unsociable!" returned Miss Mooney playfully, "you reely are. You should"— But the rest of her remarks was drowned in the clattering of the wheels over the roughly paved yard as the equipage departed.

Mr. Cassidy watched it till it was out of sight, and then turned into the house, yawning.

"I don't know when I've spent such an evening," he said to himself. "I think I'll go and have a chat with Esther to brighten myself up."

The latter in the mean while had anxiously awaited the hour of her dismissal; visions of Peter's distress and indignation haunted her. She knew that, utterly dependent on her as he always was for everything, he would no more think of seeking wherewith to satisfy his hunger than of preparing his own couch for the night. How unreasonable and unkind her mistress was; ha! thought Esther to herself, may be she might suffer for it some day.

"Won't I walk that ould wan out o' the house?" she said, smiling and nodding her head, as she beheld herself, in imagination, an imposing figure, clad in crimson silk and with long garnet earrings in her ears, imperatively commanding her mistress to depart, and heaping ignominy of every description upon her devoted head.

It was this thought which had so often upheld her when Mrs. Lyons was aggravating; little did the latter think, many a time when she herself had been almost disarmed by the girl's meekness, that Esther was secretly look-

ing forward with feverish eagerness to the day when all old scores would be effectually wiped out.

Hour after hour passed, and still no summons came; Esther's head, which had been supported on her hands, sank lower and lower, and finally rested on the table; the tallow-candle flickered in the socket, and went out with a great fizzing and sputtering, but she did not move. She had been astir since five that morning, and had worked hard all day; now she slept so soundly that nothing short of a vigorous shake would have awakened her.

Thus it came to pass that when Mr. Cassidy looked into the kitchen after the departure of the majority of his guests, finding all in darkness and receiving no answer to his call, he concluded that Esther had gone home.

"May be I 'll have a bit of a walk in that direction myself," he mused. "I dare say she has n't gone far, and it will do me good to have a pipe and a breath of fresh air."

His admiration for Esther was growing day by day, and he sought her society more

and more eagerly, yet he was careful to account for it even to himself, and had generally some excuse ready when, on occasions like the present, he went beyond the mark he usually assigned to himself.

It was not much past nine, and a lovely moonlight night. Mr. Cassidy walked along at a good pace, puffing vigorously at his pipe, and chuckling to himself as he thought of his sister at that moment exhausting herself in the endeavor to entertain her guest.

"Faith, I 've the best of the bargain, I think," he said to himself; "she 's a caution, that good lady."

Suddenly, as he was walking along, he tripped over something on the road, and nearly fell. Stooping, with an oath, he took up a pickaxe which some careless workman had left lying there, apparently as a pitfall for unwary passers by, who were the less likely to escape it that the road was rather dark just at that particular point, being overshadowed on either side by a high bank planted with fir-trees.

Mr. Cassidy swore a little to himself.

"I think the fellow who threw that there wants to break the legs of every one that's passing," he growled, as with characteristic selfishness he flung the pickaxe down on exactly the same spot; *he* would take care to step over it on his return.

He was surprised to find no sign of Esther, for he had walked quickly in the hope of overtaking her, and being now close to her home bethought himself that he would ascertain if she had returned or not.

The bolt was drawn fast, and there was no sound within; evidently Esther had not yet come back. With an unaccountable impulse of curiosity, he slipped back the rusty bolt and peered in. There was no light in the little cabin, except the feeble flickering of the turf-fire over which crouched the grotesque figure just discernible in the uncertain glow.

Cassidy looked round sharply, and then withdrew, closing the door after him, and hastily drawing the bolt. He did not rec-

ognize his former assailant, but did not care to disturb this redoubtable brother of Esther's, who now appeared quiet and harmless enough. *She* was not there, — that was more to the purpose. What could detain her at this time of night?

Half vexed, half disappointed, he sauntered away in the direction whence he had come. There was no hurry; if he kept about for a little he would be sure to meet her, and then he would pretend to be angry, and would chide her for being so late, evoking the ready excuses, the retorts half alarmed, half pert, which amused him so much. It would be good fun, better than returning to be perchance pounced upon by his sister, and forced to do his share in entertaining Mrs. Patterson.

Accordingly he did not hasten on his homeward way, but strolled along, leisurely enough, stepping cautiously over the pick-axe, and pausing at the turn of the road to look and listen for Esther's approach.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CRIME OF AN INNOCENT.

By an unexpected stroke of good fortune, Dan had managed to be reinstated in his former place as foreman in the gardens at Brockley Court, and was now working there as steadily and regularly as though he had never left it. But though his fellow laborers, from the gardener down to the least of the ragamuffins who collected snails and weeded the paths, were unanimous in declaring that whatever had come over him, Dan was no longer the same man, no outsider could realize the extent of the havoc that Esther's treachery had wrought within him. In proportion to the tenacity with which he had clung to his hopes was the overwhelming despair which now came upon him; as for his love for Esther — that was the worst part of it — it positively would not

die, but wound about his heart, gnawing at it like some noxious reptile, and poisoning the sweetness and trustfulness of his nature. He grew sullen and morose, showing plainly as he went about his work how distasteful it had now become to him; at home he was silent, irritable, and gloomy, his mother averring that she never would have known him. Sorely distressed in truth was the good woman, and constantly was her patience tried, but though she frequently lamented over his altered demeanor to her neighbors, she was more forbearant with the lad himself than might have been expected from a person of her character.

She had, however, no suspicion of Esther's faithlessness, for Dan was careful never to mention her name, his quarrel with Mr. Cassidy and subsequent dismissal accounting for his return to his former occupation. Every evening, moreover, it was his custom to walk in the direction of Esther's cabin, about the hour when the latter returned from her work, and Mrs.

Drennan naturally inferred that they met and conversed by appointment.

The truth was that though Dan used on these occasions to watch for Esther's coming as eagerly as he had been wont to do of yore, it was now from behind the shelter of a friendly hedge, where he ensconced himself every evening that he might see her pass by. A look in the pretty, heartless face which had so bewitched him, the rustle of her skirts as they brushed against the thorn bushes beside him, a hasty kiss on the path which her feet had lately trodden — these were the things on which his hungry heart was wont to feed.

It so happened that Dan was obliged to spend the day, on which Mrs. Lyons' entertainment took place, at a flower-show several miles from his home, in charge of certain contributions from Brockley Court. These were very valuable, and the gardener, who himself did not wish to be so much tied down on this festive occasion, had given strict orders to his subordinate to be sure

to remain in the tent where they were set forth.

Hour after hour, therefore, had Dan stood behind the towering foliage, doggedly enduring the heat and fatigue, watching the stream of gayly-dressed people wander past, listening in the same dull, uncomprehending fashion to the vapid encomiums of the uninitiated as to the prosy utterances plentifully interlarded with Latin of the more scientific. Now and then the music of the distant band was wafted to his ears, and poor Dan, as easily moved thereby to tears or laughter as the rest of his countryfolk, felt his heart swell almost to bursting within him.

However, the longest day soon comes to an end, and at last Dan, in company with his superior — who, having passed so many hours in company with judges and other distinguished people, was very grand and patronizing indeed — found himself seated in the cart containing the precious plants aforesaid, waiting till the block at

the egress from the show should have subsided sufficiently to allow them to pass.

The crowd was ebbing and flowing round the gate, a babel of voices and laughter sounding confusedly in Dan's ears; now and then there was a general stampede as a horse or a bullock, decorated with a large green or pink ticket announcing its success, pranced or floundered past, led by triumphant owners or hirelings. There were policemen shouting themselves hoarse, many beggars, a large contingent of the ragged youth of the neighborhood, and not a few tipsy men.

All at once, in the midst of this inspiriting scene, a strange figure appeared, which attracted universal attention. A woman, still young, and remarkably handsome, with a man's hat placed sideways on her dishevelled black hair, a man's coat and waistcoat hanging loosely over her own shabby gown, elbowed her way through the throng, and presently stood still, staring wildly about her.

"What are yez doin' here?" she cried, "gapin' an' starin' as if there was goin' to be somewan hanged. There 'll be no hangin' to-morrow. I 'll tell yez that. Troth, they thought to git a hoult o' me, but they 'll niver do that — niver."

Here she broke off, to shake her fist angrily at a policeman, who, however, merely nodded good-humoredly as he replied, "Sure enough, Paddy, we all know that."

"In the name o' goodness what sort of a woman is that?" cried Dan, aghast, "an' why do they be callin' her *Paddy?*"

"Did ye niver hear tell of her before?" said a man near him, overhearing the horrified exclamation. "Sure, that 's poor Lizzie Devnan, as fine a girl as iver stepped while she had her sinses."

"Is she mad now, then?" asked the gardener, whose curiosity was also aroused, and who peered out from his bower of plants in undisguised excitement.

"Oh, bedad she is, — clane out of her mind, iver since the day they hung her

brother on her, an' him all she had in the world. Poor Pat Devnan! Ay, they hung him, sure enough, an' what's more, they had her up to swear his life away, — up at the court house beyant, so they did."

"Save us an' bless us, however could they do that?" cried Dan, his blood running cold with horror at the very idea.

"Sure, they had her up in the box, axin' her this, that, an' the other, till they druv her wild between them," returned the man, nodding emphatically. "Was n't there three or four lawyers at her? She 'd say wan thing, — the crathur, — an' thin she 'd say another, an' thin the whole o' thim 'ud be hammerin' at her together. In the end they could n't git a word out of her at all, an' says they, 'that's the most damagin' proof agin' the prisoner we 've had yit,' they says."

"Well, you know, the law must have its course," remarked the gardener sententiously. He was a Scotchman, and took a matter-of-fact rather than a sympathetic

view of the case. "Evidence is evidence, and must be got at, else what would become of the general public?"

"What was it he done?" interrupted Dan eagerly.

"*Ah!*" in amazement at his ignorance, — "don't ye remember Pat Devnan, that kilt his cousin Hugh six year ago? Sure, it all came about over an argeyment they had about a bit o' money the uncle left between them. Anny way, they hung the poor fella, an' Lizzie 's been ravin' mad iver since. She does be thinkin' she 's Paddy himself, — the crathur, — an' that she 'scaped out o' prison, — whatever she thinks has become of her rale self I dunno — Oh, glory be to God, look at her now!"

Some ill-advised joker in the crowd had seen fit to lay hold of poor Lizzie, declaring that he was straightway about to give her up to the prison authorities, and that she would, without doubt, be hung on the morrow.

Thereupon the poor wild creature began

to struggle frantically, striking many of those nearest to her, and laying about her with as much good-will, not to say science, as though she had been in truth the man whose part she personated. This was the signal for a general scrimmage, — the children whooped, many of the biggest of them ranging themselves for and against the unfortunate Lizzie, hanging on to her skirts, and hustling her hither and thither in their enthusiasm; not a few blows were exchanged between older combatants; and finally the hapless cause of all this commotion was led away, still violently struggling, between a couple of policemen.

This startling scene deadened for a time the painful thoughts which so constantly tormented Dan, and during the long homeward journey he went over and over it in his mind, dwelling especially on the cause of the poor woman's mental aberration.

"To think that there could be such wickedness in the world — that they could thry to make the crathur desthroy her own bro-

ther!" he said to himself, and it seemed to him that the machinery of the law was a more hideous concern than he had hitherto had conception of.

It was almost night by the time the cart had arrived at its destination, and the flowers and plants were safely housed, but late though it was, Dan would not return without first accomplishing his pilgrimage to Esther's cabin.

"She 'll be at home an' asleep by this," he mused, "but I 'll just run roun' the house all the same."

The moon had risen and shone bright and clear from the cloudless sky, pouring a flood of light down the winding pathway, and on Esther's tumble-down abode. Great was Dan's surprise on approaching the latter to find the door wide open, no light or fire within, and no trace of either of the inhabitants. He stood, staring blankly, on the threshold, a dim presentiment of evil mingling with his astonishment, when a peculiar cry at a little distance startled him still

further, — a guttural, unearthly sound, which he knew could only proceed from the deaf-mute.

Regaining his self-possession with an effort, he hastened in the direction indicated by the voice; but having turned the corner of the road, just before the overshadowed portion already mentioned, he suddenly came to a standstill, gazing on the scene before him in motionless and voiceless horror.

Prone on his face on the stony path lay a man whose length and massiveness of form would have proclaimed his identity, had he not worn the long light great-coat in which Dan had so often seen his late master. The hat had fallen off, and the head, from which blood poured copiously, was battered in, in a manner horrible to behold. Dancing wildly around him, and brandishing aloft a pick-axe in his long, lean arms, was Peter the deaf-mute; his contorted face sickly white in the moonlight, his eyes glaring, and the shrieks with which

he rent the air interrupted now and then by yells of yet more fearful laughter.

Mr. Cassidy had unwittingly enabled him to wreak the vengeance for which his savage soul had thirsted so madly, and the desire for which had, on this night, reached its culminating point. Peter, raging and indignant at his sister's unusual delay, had all at once discovered, by means of a sudden breath of cold air, that the door, which Mr. Cassidy had imperfectly fastened, was open, and that he was free to go whither he listed. He had rushed out, therefore, in search of Esther, and his passion, already at fever height, had turned into positive frenzy as he caught sight of his enemy lazily leaning over a gate and puffing at his pipe.

In some dim, inexplicable fashion he connected his sister's delay with this unlooked-for sight, and was hurrying forward, bent on vengeance yet scarcely knowing how to compass it, when he tripped over the pick-axe (which lay, as already mentioned, in the

darkest bit of the road) and fell sprawling on the ground. His fury at the unexpected check was quickly changed to triumph at the discovery of so suitable a weapon, and dominating his wrath by a sudden impulse of vile cunning, he had crept along in the shadow of the hedge until close behind his victim, when he had sprung upon him suddenly, felling him to the earth.

After one long, terrified glance, Dan understood something of what had occurred, and marking Peter pause, and uplift the axe as if for another blow, he staggered forward into the light, throwing his arms above his head and making frantic signs to him to desist. For a moment his own danger was extreme; the deaf-mute paused, whirled his axe in dangerous proximity to Dan's head, and then, suddenly recognizing him, dropped the weapon and stared blankly at him, retreating as he advanced, and finally cowering against the hawthorn hedge, whence his gleaming eyes followed the would-be rescuer's every movement.

Conquering his repugnance with an effort, Dan approached the prostrate form that lay so still in a pool of its own blood. Stooping down he lifted the shattered head and gazed into the ghastly face, with its startled, wide-open eyes. It told its own tale too plainly to be doubted, even had the extent of the injuries received not been such as to preclude the possibility of life still remaining. Dan felt the nerveless wrist, and listened for the beating of the heart in vain; and then, realizing that his late master was indeed past succor, turned all his attention to the endeavor to save Peter from the consequences of his act.

"He 's murthered him sure enough!" he groaned to himself, "an' 'll be hung if they find him out."

The wretched lad meanwhile had crawled from ambush, and now stood in the pathway, his savage wrath cooled down, and the terror in Dan's countenance proving infectious. The poor half-witted creature had indeed no dread of possible retribution, but

was all at once overwhelmed with unspeakable horror at his own work. He stood pointing to the motionless figure in the roadway, trembling in every limb, and muttering in a fashion which lent the last touch of ghastliness to the scene.

Dan seized him by the hand (recognizing the necessity for prompt action) and endeavored to draw him past the body of his victim. But the lad shrieked wildly, starting back at almost every inch gained, until his protector began to despair of getting him to proceed. But at last, with a sudden rush, they left the terrible thing behind, and fled down the path as though pursued by a legion of demons.

Trembling and breathless they arrived at the cabin, and Dan, taking down the candle and matches from the shelf, where he knew Esther usually kept them, struck a light. For a moment the two scared, pallid faces stared at each other in the dim gleam; and then Dan, collecting his scattered senses, endeavored to remove all traces of Peter's

deed. There were certain marks on the latter's bare legs and feet, and nether garments, that would undoubtedly have betrayed his part in the night's work, had it not been for such friendly assistance.

Searching about the cabin, Dan found soap, and a tub half filled with water, with which he scrubbed at Peter until he removed all treacherous signs from his person, and succeeded, if not in obliterating, at least in rendering those on his garments undistinguishable from the general grime. He himself was trembling in every limb, and poured forth many a prayer and groan during his work, but his desire to save the deaf-mute at any cost lent speed to his movements, and unusual craftiness to his brain.

When these operations were finished, he forced the lad into his customary seat by the hearth, cast a hasty glance round to assure himself that no traces of unusual disorder remained in the little abode, and finally withdrew, being careful to close and bolt the door securely.

CHAPTER XIV.

MURDER WILL OUT.

ONCE outside in the cool night air, with the placid sky above his head, and the moon casting her limpid beams around him as calmly as though she had not aided by their radiance the perpetration of so foul a deed, such self-possession as Dan yet possessed deserted him altogether. Now that the necessity for action was over, the pent-up terror within him grew and spread till it paralyzed every faculty, overmastered every other emotion. For the moment he could not think of the probable consequences of the night's work. Peter and even Esther were forgotten in the recollection of that awful figure lying even now so close to him, between the fair tall hedges whose early green gleamed pale in the moonlight, and whose curving branches waved so gracefully

in every passing breath of wind. *It* must be growing cold now and stiffening — prone under the lonely heavens — the blood trickling down the mossy path, and, oh! those eyes! those terrible eyes! The look in them might well haunt a man to his dying day.

Hark! what was that? Was it a footstep breaking in upon the stillness?

In a moment the blood leaped back to Dan's pale face, and the reasoning power returned to his mind. It was no footstep indeed, but it might have been; some one, one person, might and would shortly pass that way. Esther must in a few minutes do so, and unless Dan could devise some manner of preventing her, would look upon the awful sight, and become aware of her brother's guilt.

It was now eleven o'clock, two hours past the time when she usually returned; something very extraordinary must have occurred to keep her so long, thought Dan to himself, but he could not stop to speculate on that now. She would be on the spot in a

few minutes, and at all hazards he must conceal from her that knowledge which would be death.

"She 'd niver hould up her head agin if she knew — the crathur!" he said to himself, "an' not for the world 'ud I like her to be lookin' at that fearful sight. If I was so bad meself, what 'ud it be for her, an' her that thought so much o' the masther? If I can on'y keep her from goin' that way even till to-morrow — the hue an' cry 'll be iverywhere by that — an' she 'll niver know who done it. There 's been plenty kilt before now, an' the murtherers niver found out. She must n't know, it 'ud be the death of her, so it would, and thanks be to God she *need* niver know, as on'y me seen it, an' I 'll be kilt meself sooner nor let on."

Dan was not inactive while reflecting, but had climbed over the hedge, and was hastening along a little bypath that led across the fields to the point where the lane aforesaid joined the high-road, and which, though shorter, was not generally used by Esther,

entailing, as it did, two rather awkward scrambles over the fences, being stony at all times and frequently so muddy as to be almost impassable. Could he but, on some pretext or another, persuade her to return by this path, the shock would be averted, at least for a time, and she would be spared the sight which he dreaded so much for her.

"I 'll have to make out there 's somethin' the matther wid Pether," he thought, as he sped along. "I 'll tell her he 's sick — God forgive me for magnifyin' that way. But sure it 's the thrute, after all; if the poor boy had been the same as the rest of us he 'd niver have done the likes o' that."

He reached the furthest hedge and sprang into the high-road just at the right moment, for a figure was plainly discernible hastening on in his direction. This was indeed Esther returning home with all speed, very irate at having been detained till this unconscionable hour, and sorely uneasy about her poor neglected charge. Had Mrs. Patterson's vehicle arrived a little earlier, or

had Mrs. Lyons been less exacting, the tragedy of the evening would never have been enacted. As it was, however, the unreasonable behavior of Esther's mistress, subsequent to her guests' departure, stood Dan in good stead, for while the girl chafed and fretted over the score of tasks that were allotted to her before she was permitted to go home, the time thus gained was invaluable to him.

"Esther," he cried, running to meet her, and speaking quickly and excitedly, "Esther, hurry, hurry, for the love o' God! Pether 's in an awful state, God help him. He 'll be a corpse on yer hands, if ye don't look out!" ("An' that 's thrue," he commented to himself inwardly.) "I happened to look into the cabin a while ago, an' I found him in a terrible state intirely. Come this way; it 's quicker, an' ye 'll have to hurry if ye want to keep him alive at all."

As he spoke, he dragged Esther up the bank and through the hedge, leaping with

her into the field and urging her on by the arm.

"What in the name o' God happened him?" gasped Esther, too much alarmed to be surprised at this unexpected meeting, or to resent his authoritative tone.

"I dunno at all. May be it was some kind of a fit he got. Hurry, hurry, anny-way, an' if ye 'll take my advice be careful of him to-morra' an' don't stir a step away from him."

He put in this proviso, as a sudden new fear struck him that Peter, though incapable of speech, might still in some way betray himself by wandering to the scene of the occurrence. He would need careful watching, and all chance of his again escaping must be guarded against. Dan, who did not, of course, know that the unfortunate Mr. Cassidy had himself enabled his aggressor to break loose, concluded that Esther had omitted her customary precautions, and was the more anxious to avert a recurrence of such carelessness.

They sped on together over the stony path, which Esther in her anxiety trod as lightly as though it were the softest carpet, and parted outside the cabin door.

"May be you 'll find him betther now," said Dan, as she fumbled nervously at the bolt. He trusted that Peter's disturbed demeanor and unusual pallor would prevent Esther from doubting the truth of his story, and would keep her occupied on the following day, but he was a little uneasy all the same, lest she should discover the imposition. The bolt creaked in the rusty socket, and in another moment the girl was inside her home, characteristically parting from her former lover without a word of thanks for the anxiety he had evinced on her behalf.

Dan hastened homewards with all the speed he could muster, which was not very great, as now that there was no need for further exertion, the old terror promptly regained possession of him. His teeth chattered in his head, he trembled in every limb

and stumbled frequently; finally entering his mother's house with the aspect rather of a sleep-walker than of a man in full possession of his senses.

Mrs. Drennan, red-eyed and pallid-cheeked, with cap awry, and every appearance of perturbation, rushed at him with an inarticulate exclamation, and flung her arms round his neck, kissing him, and rocking to and fro with him in her embrace. Much to his dismay, Dan further descried Mrs. Green in the background, apparently violently excited.

"Troth, is that yerself at last? Ye have yer mother wild with fright, not comin' home till this hour o' the night. Ye 're the nice lad, so ye are, playin' such a thrick on her. Sure I myself could n't rest aisy an' be thinkin' of her! 'Somethin' 's happened me on'y son,' says she. 'Ah,' says I, 'what would happen him unless a car druv' over him, or may be a bull stuck his two horns in him.' I declare me heart was broke thryin' to comfort her. What kep' ye so long — eh?"

Thus adjured, Dan endeavored to collect his scattered thoughts sufficiently to offer an excuse which might account for his prolonged absence; but his inventive powers having been already overtaxed, in the present shattered condition of his nerves he found himself incapable of the effort, and only responded by a vacant stare.

"D' ye hear what we 're axin'?" cried Mrs. Drennan, suddenly detaching herself from him and looking sharply in his face. "For goodness' sake where were ye at all? I was near dyin' wid the fear somethin' had happened ye. D' ye know what o'clock it is? Near twelve o'clock at night. What were ye doin', I ax ye?"

Dan, gathering himself together, muttered something about having been kept at the garden.

"Ah, ye 're lyin' now!" cried the two women together; his mother enforcing the accusation with a vigorous shake, and continuing in great indignation: "did n't Mrs. Green herself send up wan of her little boys

to Misther Fraser beyant, an' him in bed, to ax afther ye, an' did n't he make answer ye 'd left the garden a long while?"

"Thin I tell ye what," interrupted Dan fiercely, "I 'll have no more spyin' afther me from Mrs. Green nor anny wan else — I don't care who it is. 'Pon me word, a man 'ud be moithered out of his life among yez. I 'm sorry if I 'm afther givin' ye a fright," he added, suddenly calming down, and turning to his mother, "an' I would n't have done it for all in the world if I could have helped — but I 'll not stand Mrs. Green" —

"Oh, thin, indeed I 'll not ax ye to stand me nor to sit me ayther," retorted that lady with sarcasm that was more withering than intelligible. "I 'm goin' aff wid meself now, an 'll be glad to be shut o' ye. Sure it 's dhrunk he is, Mrs. Drennan — that 's aisy seen. Bedad, me own poor man could n't be warse nor that, him that spends mostly ivery Saturday night wid his head in a ditch, God help him! But I niver thought to see Dan Drennan wid the dhrop in, so I

did n't. Ah! gi' me the man that can take it quite an' good-natured, an' not be for fightin' an' quar'lin' wid ivery wan he comes across, beginnin' wid his own mother!"

With this the good woman retired, pausing in the doorway to give utterance to a sort of crow of mingled defiance and derision, which exasperated Dan beyond measure.

His mother herself was a little frightened at the storm of invective with which he responded to this sally, and at the short, angry replies which he made to her repeated questions, finally flinging himself into a chair and taking refuge in sullen silence. She withdrew, finding threats and persuasions alike useless, and had Dan been his own easy-going, good-natured self, he would have been sorely distressed and remorseful at the frequent groans and sobs which were to be heard for some time proceeding from the inner chamber, but which he was now too much absorbed to heed. This little skirmish had in a manner cleared his brain, and awoke within him a vague sense of personal

insecurity. What answer should he make if questioned by his fellow laborers as to the cause of his disappearance? Thanks to Mrs. Green's officiousness, the fact was known to the gardener, and in all probability would by him be imparted to most of the workmen at Brockley Court. It was certainly very awkward, and the more Dan cogitated, the more certain he felt that he must on no account mention that he had been in such close proximity to the scene of the murder.

"I hope they won't be thinkin' *I'm* afther doin' it," he said to himself somewhat uneasily; but he presently dismissed the thought as too monstrously improbable — none of the neighbors would be such fools as *that!* No, the perpetrator of the deed would never be discovered; he, and only he, would have it in his power to betray him.

"Thank God!" said Dan fervently. "Ay, Pether, avick, I'll die before I'll inform on ye. Esther, darlint, he's safe in my hands!"

A strange sort of triumph, almost of joy, took possession of him, as he thought by what marvellous chance he had saved the good name and happiness of the girl he loved, and the very life of her brother.

"Ay, he 's safe, thanks be to God; Esther, jewel, ye thought poor Dan the dirt undher yer feet, so ye did; an' yet, ye see, on'y for him yer brother 'ud have been hung — ay, hung as dead as I 'm alive."

To his ignorant mind this was a foregone conclusion. It did not occur to him that, under the circumstances, even "the law," on which he looked with so much dread, would probably have relaxed its severity in the case of the deaf-mute.

A new train of horrors was suggested by this thought, and his exultation was short-lived. Seated opposite the fireless hearth, he dwelt upon what *might* have been the consequences of Peter's deed with almost as much anguish as though he had not, as he considered, so fortunately averted them. Suppose the deaf-mute had been

discovered, and taken up, and tried at the assizes, what would have become of Esther?

"It 'ud have kilt her out-an'-out," he mused, "for she loves the very ground that poor misfortunate boy walks upon. Why, may be they 'd have had her up at the court house to swear agin' him, the same as the poor crathur I seen this mornin'. They might,—the Governmint might,—an' that 's what 'ud raly kill her, or dhrive her out of her mind."

Confused visions of the scene of the afternoon mingled with that of the tragedy more recently enacted, and gradually Dan fell into a sort of waking nightmare, imagining all possible contingencies, and preparing to do battle with every conceivable misfortune. The wild figure of the mad woman stood out in startling distinctness, and brought home to him the more vividly the necessity for saving Esther from a similar fate.

"It was a sthrange thing I should have seen that woman to-day of all days in the

year," he said to himself; "may be God sent her for a warnin' to me to put me on me guard."

When the first pale gleams of the early spring dawn had begun to filter in through the little latticed window, Dan arose from his seat. It had not occurred to him to go to bed; sleep, or even repose, being utterly impossible in his present overwrought condition. He shrank from meeting his mother's reproachful eyes, and dreaded still more a renewal of the eager, querulous questioning of the preceding night.

"Betther be off to me work before she 's about," he said to himself. "It 's hard to be always goin' agin her, but whin I can't tell her annythin' that 'ud satisfy her, what am I to do?"

He provided himself with a crust of bread, and drank a deep draught of water from a jug that stood on the dresser, after which he stealthily opened the door and crept out.

It was early in April, and the world was

full with spring sounds and sights. Though the faint rose-flush of the dawn was only beginning to spread over the heavens, the birds were awake and astir, making the fresh morning air alive with their twitterings and flutterings; the bleating of lambs and the lowing of cattle sounded pleasantly from distant fields, and nearer at hand there was the rustle of the breeze through the hedgerows, and the trickling of the little stream that crept through the mosses of the wood at Dan's right, and came leaping over the high bank to thread its way amid the long rank grass and brambles of the roadside. Gradually, as the brightness above grew and widened, the sleepy world divested itself of its dusky wrappings and lay revealed in all its beauty; still and calm in the reposeful charm of early morning.

The woods and hedges were powdered over with a tender, exquisite bloom, as it were a promise of future glory; every variety of undefinable hue hovered over the former, delicate pinks and ethereal blues and

grays, where the leaves were yet enfolded in their casings, mingled with the vivid green of an emancipated chestnut or elder, and the perpetual gloom of a magnificent Scotch fir. The hedges were a study in themselves, — white in patches with flowering blackthorn, green with trailing wild rose and bramble, while here and there, where the sun habitually caught them, were stretches of hawthorn in full leaf. A lovely world, an innocent, jubilant world, that, waking up all at once, brightened with every moment of advancing day, and laughed in the face of the rising sun in very ecstasy of glee. A lark shot up, almost from beneath Dan's feet, and went circling above his head, higher and higher, its pure, free, joyous trill piercing through and through the poor lad's heavy heart. It seemed no beauteous world to him, in sooth, this blithe spring morning; the sense of sin and shame and sorrow which oppressed him seemed to overspread the fair face of nature, tainting even the breath of morning with the heaviness of death.

He sat down by the stream, and washed hands and face in the pure, cool water, and then he knelt with clasped hands and eyes uplifted to the sky that was now blue and clear, and strewn with little golden clouds.

"Lord, have mercy on me," prayed Dan; "Holy Mother, pray for us all, protect us all."

He remained by the roadside until the hour drew near at which he usually betook himself to his employer's, and then rising, walked thither swiftly enough, being already hard at work when the big bell rang out which generally summoned him from his slumbers.

The gardener did not appear as early as usual, of which Dan was heartily glad, dreading to be catechized as to his proceedings on the night before, and fearing still more any allusion to the tragedy which must now shortly become known. When would they find the body? When would the news spread? What would people say about it?

These were the questions which he perpetually asked himself, and he scanned the faces of his fellow laborers anxiously but furtively, as they arrived one by one, dreading to see some answer there.

The first hour passed, however, without the occurrence of anything unusual; but at about seven o'clock, as Dan was proceeding to the tool-shed, he was startled to observe the gardener standing there in excited conversation with no less a person than Michael Green, while a little knot of men had gathered round them, and were listening, open-mouthed and eager.

Dan's heart thumped violently against his ribs, and his knees knocked together; the gardener turning at the same moment, beckoned to him to approach.

"Have you heard what 's happened?" he asked in low and awestruck tones, as he drew near. "Mike here tells me Mr. Cassidy has been found in the lane near the Dalys', stone dead — murdered."

"Murthered!" echoed Dan feebly. His

face was pale, and he trembled perceptibly, and though anxious to avert suspicion by expressing a due amount of surprise and horror, was absolutely incapable of another word.

"Yes, murdered," repeated the gardener, gazing at him in amazement. "Did you know it before?" Then, as a sudden thought struck him, "Perhaps you heard something about it last night; I believe you were n't home till all hours."

"Hothin that 's the thrute," chimed in Green, turning sharply round on him, "an' thin goin' on in a quare way, as herself says. May be ye knew what was done."

Dan's jaw dropped, and he glanced round at the little group of his fellows with a terrified, hunted look, as of an animal at bay; never did an innocent man assume more completely the appearances of guilt.

"What d' ye mane?" he said huskily at last. "How could I know? I 've left Misther Cassidy this long while. As for

bein' out late last night, I — just went for a bit of a walk an' — forgot meself, an' come home later than I intended."

The lame, hesitating way in which he offered this explanation contradicted every word he uttered, and as, at the end, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, he wiped the great drops from his brow and glanced uneasily round, they fell back from him a little, and gazed at him with curious looks that terrified him still more.

"Humph! well, it 's nobody's business here," remarked the gardener after a pause. "Be off to your work, lads."

Dan withdrew to the potting-shed, walking a little unsteadily, and conscious that all eyes were fixed on his retreating figure.

After a little while the gardener joined him there, subjecting him to a series of questions which Dan parried as well as he could; making some rather wild statements and contradicting himself several times. Finally, turning upon his tormentor sharply, he declared his inability to tell him anything

more, and requested in somewhat surly tones to be left alone.

The man, who had been very cautious in his remarks, not directly alluding to the murder, but denoting pretty plainly that he regarded Dan's behavior as suspicious, paused suddenly, with a curl of the lip.

"Well, it 's to be hoped no one will ask *me* anything about your proceedings," he remarked, after a moment's silence. "I should be sorry to have to say what I think."

He turned on his heel, leaving Dan in a fever of mingled anxiety and anger. That this man should turn against him, and show so plainly his intention of speaking ill of him, should the occasion offer, was what he had least expected. It did not occur to him that the gardener, alien by birth and habits to the people of the neighborhood, was not likely to share that clannish feeling which made them hang so closely together, and shrink with so much horror from the very notion of turning "informer." After

a little while Green came creeping in, his good-natured face paler than usual, and a look of real compassion in his eyes.

"Dan," he whispered, after glancing anxiously round the shed to make sure he was not overheard, "Dan, why don't ye make off while there 's time? Do now, for the love o' God — the polis 'll be after ye immadiate."

"Who says I done it?" gasped Dan, turning on the other with white lips, and wide-open, terrified eyes.

"Ah, God bless us, sure all knows by this. Was n't it on ivery wan's lips the hour ye come home last night, an' the way ye wint on? An' thin whin they found him kilt, ye know — an' afther the quar'l yez had an' all — sure 't is aisy seen. Take my advice an' run, Dan."

"I niver raised me hand to him — I niver laid a finger on him — I call God to be me witness!" protested Dan solemnly.

"Well, well, don't waste yer time talkin', but be off in the name o' God!" returned

the other quickly. "An' whist, there's a kind of an ugly-lookin' stain here on the leg of yer throusers, Dan, at the back, that ye 'd do well to wash, me boy."

Dan twisted his leg round sharply, and saw in truth a dark, brownish-red streak on his corduroy nether garment, near the ankle, which he had not hitherto noticed, and which bore emphatic witness against him. In his anxiety for Peter, it had not occurred to him that he himself might carry away with him treacherous traces of last night's deed.

For a moment, all the blood in his body seemed to leap into his face, and then to race away with sickening speed to his heart, which beat so violently it seemed to shake his whole frame; he tried to speak, but the words died on his dry lips, and his eyes alone were raised in dumb, pitiful appeal.

"Run, Dan, avick," whispered Green eagerly. "That 's the on'y chance ye have now. There 's been too much said as it is, about you an' yer doin's last night."

He had good grounds for alleging this fact, his own spouse having been foremost in commenting on Dan's prolonged absence from home and extraordinary behavior; though to do the woman justice, she had then no suspicion of what had really occurred, nor of the mischief which might accrue from her incautious speech.

Thus urged, Dan threw down his trowel and crept out of the shed, pausing a moment to assure himself that no one was in sight; one hasty glance having proved that he was unobserved, he ran down the path and out of the garden as fast as his trembling limbs would carry him. Across the park, dodging from tree to tree in new-found cunning, through the fir plantations, over the high, ivy-grown wall, and Dan, finding himself in the road, ran at full speed in the contrary direction to his own home. All his wits appeared to have deserted him, else he would have known that he could not have more ill assured his safety than by taking to the high-road; his mind was a blank, his

very courage had oozed away, he was conscious of nothing but a vast, overwhelming terror that urged him to run, run, whither he knew not, and with what purpose was undefined.

The series of shocks he had undergone, together with the unusual fatigue, the sleepless night, the scarce-broken fast, soon told on a frame unaccustomed to such strains, and in a short time his head began to swim, his limbs to falter under him, and his heart almost to suffocate him with the violence of its beating. He ran still, however, reeling and stumbling many times, and catching frantically at the banks and the projecting branches of the wayside trees to save himself from falling. Now the dreary length of gray, dusty road heaved and billowed beneath his feet, the hedges rushed past his face, the wind roared in his ears; of a sudden the path leaped up and smote him, there was a mighty crash, and Dan lay prone and motionless in a deathlike swoon.

After what seemed a long, long time, he

came to himself, and sitting up, weak and dizzy, tried to remember what terrible thing this was which weighed upon him so heavily, and whether it was last year, or last month, or yesterday, that he had been flying so fast along the road.

In a few minutes it all came back to him, and rising hurriedly he tried to hasten onward as before; but his limbs gave way beneath him, and a sickening, overpowering faintness came over him, which warned him that such an attempt would be useless.

He sat down on the mossy bank once more, and reflected. His brain was clearer now, and a new, strange calm settled down upon him all at once, which drove away his fears, and under the influence of which a steady, resolute purpose was formed in his mind.

"I can die for her," said Dan, looking upwards, while a smile broke over his face. "Ay, thank God, I can die for her."

Yes, he could die — he knew how to die. This last resource was open to him, the re-

membrance of which has sustained so many of his country-folk in suffering, in privation, in battle, in great risks, in forlorn hopes. If he could not live and carry out his purpose, he could at least die — die as an Irishman should. And be it remembered that, though it is a frequent reproach to the Celt that he does not know how to live, it has yet to be ascertained that he does not know how to die.

"Ay, thank God, I can do that," said Dan, and retracing his steps, he walked slowly homewards, pausing many times to rest, with an ever-increasing sense of physical weakness, but with the resolution he had taken unshaken in his breast.

CHAPTER XV.

AT BAY.

ABOUT one o'clock on the same day, Father Duffy was seated at his early dinner. The remains of a cold leg of mutton was set forth before him, garnished with a sufficiency of parsley to ornament ten similar dishes, for by such means did Margaret, the housekeeper, endeavor to atone for the scarcity of meat. Father Duffy, knife and fork in hand, was apparently engaged in abstruse calculations, making cabalistic signs over the joint, and pausing of a sudden to contemplate it with a very serious expression, and his head turned a little to one side.

The truth was that, though he happened to be extremely hungry, and could easily have disposed of every scrap of the fare set before him, he was obliged to bear in mind

that Margaret was also to dine off the joint in question, and the knotty point which he was endeavoring to decide concerned the amount of the delicacy which he himself might venture to consume without infringing on the share a healthy woman might consider her due.

After some reflection, he marked off a considerable portion of the cold meat, and then fell to at the remainder, cutting off every little scrap and paring, and eking out its insufficiency by an abundance of fine mealy potatoes, of which, as they grew in his own garden, he knew he might avail himself without stint.

This question thus decided, he troubled himself no more about such material, or, to his mind, immaterial things; and opening a book on the table beside him, had soon soared into high regions, where nought so paltry as a scanty modicum of cold mutton could interfere with his enjoyment.

He was so absorbed that, though he was sitting opposite the window, he did not

notice a wild-looking figure with fluttering draperies hurry past, nor did he hear the loud moans which broke from its lips.

He raised his head, however, startled and alarmed, as the door burst suddenly open, and Mrs. Drennan rushed into the room, pushing herself in front of the housekeeper, who had intended to announce her.

One glance at her face told him that some great misfortune had befallen her, and, hurriedly rising, he closed the door almost in the face of the curious Margaret; and then returning to her side, led her to a chair, and compassionately endeavored to calm and console her.

Mrs. Drennan's bonnet had fallen off, and only clung by the strings round her neck, and her cloak was thrown on inside out. Her sparse gray hair hung loosely about her rather bald head, escaping from beneath her cap, which had also slipped back, and her face was strangely contorted. Her whole appearance was grotesque, almost ludicrous, yet the last thing which would have occurred

to the priest would have been the inclination to laugh. Truly, if it is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, there are circumstances, comic in themselves, which on certain occasions assume the appearances of tragedy. The poor woman's face was glazed with much weeping, her limbs moved spasmodically, and she trembled like an aspen leaf beneath the priest's gaze.

"Oh, yer riverince, how will I tell ye?" she gasped at last. "Oh, God help me, how will I tell ye the — the terrible throuble that has come on me?"

"Terrible trouble!" Father Duffy's tender heart sank within him; well did he know what trouble meant when it came to the homes of the poor. There is a pretty generally recognized idea that the poor, being less sensitive than we are, more inured to hardship, and having fewer wants, suffer with less intensity when sorrow falls to their lot. And yet this is certainly a mistake. It is true that we may be called upon to endure many slight trials which are

unknown to them; but when the real misfortunes come, surely they are felt more keenly by those who, at the best of times, have so little to soften their lot. We, more refined and delicate it may be, protected by many soft wrappings, entrenched behind countless barriers, shrink shivering from the cold winds that the sturdy peasant, inured by years of hardship and nakedness, boldly exposes his bare breast to; but when the crushing blow falls, when the sharp sword smites, then indeed our protections stand us in good stead, while him it must deprive of life or limb.

"Tell me," said Father Duffy gently, patting the poor creature's shoulder as though she had been a child.

"Sure it's Dan!" she almost screamed, "they have him tuk, Father. The polis has got him, an' marched him off to the Brockley Arms for the inquist on Misther Cassidy."

"Mr. Cassidy!" echoed the priest, turning pale, "why — what has happened,

woman? Tell me quickly. I have not been out since morning, and have not heard" —

"Sure they found him dead, Father, kilt intirely, up in the lane beyant above Dalys'. Ochone! Ochone! an' they 're makin' out Dan done it, because he come home a bit late last night an' would n't let on where he 'd been."

Father Duffy looked at her with a strange, startled gaze that caused Mrs. Drennan's heart to sink lower than ever.

"Good God!" he said, and then after a pause, "when did the police take him up?"

"Just now, Father. They were just afther takin' him whin I come. I run all the way here for you to spake a word for him."

"And where was Dan last night?" asked the priest.

Mrs. Drennan explained as far as she could what had occurred, Father Duffy's expression becoming more and more grave and concerned as she mentioned the hour

at which Dan had returned, and the interval which had elapsed between his leaving the garden at Brockley Court and his appearance at home.

"Yer riverence, I 'll tell ye all, becase I know ye 'll save me on'y son. Won't ye now, in the name o' God? Ye 'll spake for him. He niver done the like."

"What was Dan about when the police came for him?" asked the priest almost sternly. "Surely he should have been at work then, and not at home with you."

"Father, I 'll tell ye the truth — I could n't git a word out o' Dan, good or bad, the whole day. He came home about ten o'clock looking rale sick an wary, an' he sat down, and not a word out of him at all. An' at last he says, 'Mother,' he says, could ye wash some dirt here aff the leg o' me throusers?' An' there was a kind of a mark on them, yer riverence, an' I went to go to wash them, an' just as I was on me knees forenenst him, the four policemen come up an' took him. 'What have I

done?' says he. And thin they tould him it was for murtherin' Misther Cassidy (save us an' bless us!) and showed him the magisthrate's paper an' all. An he wint off wid them widout another word, as quite as a lamb."

There was a long pause after Mrs. Drennan had concluded her narrative, which had been broken by many sobs and moans. She gazed anxiously in the priest's face; and all at once, appalled by what she saw there, rose and flung herself at his feet in a frenzy of terror and despair.

"Oh, yer riverence, save me boy, the on'y child that iver I had; save him for me! Oh, Father, in the name o' the God that made ye, an' the mother that brought ye into the world, don't let him be hung on me. Oh, Dan, me on'y darlin' boy, that I should live to see the day I 'd be sayin' that of ye! Oh, Dan, Dan — Lord have mercy on me" —

Her voice trailed away in an inarticulate murmur; she dragged herself nearer to the

sorrowful man before her, clasping his knees and raining passionate kisses on his feet in desperate appeal for mercy and help.

He stooped and raised her gently, sympathetic tears starting to his eyes, and unable for a moment to speak.

"I'll go and see him," he said at last. "I must go at once, and do you pray, poor soul, with all your heart and strength that God may help and have pity on him. It may be a mistake," he added tremulously; "I hope and pray it may be all a mistake."

He seized his hat and sped along the road so rapidly as to be almost immediately out of sight, while Mrs. Drennan, obediently falling on her knees, prayed as only a mother can pray for the life of her dearly-loved son.

When Father Duffy reached the public-house, where the inquest was to be held, he found that, though the jury were assembled, the coroner had not yet arrived, and, after

a little parley, he was admitted to a private interview with the prisoner.

He found him seated on a bench in one corner of the room, where he had been installed on first entering, in the company of two stalwart policemen. These latter left at the priest's request, and they were free to speak openly to each other.

Dan raised his head as Father Duffy entered, but immediately buried it in his hands again, uttering no word of greeting.

"Dan," said the priest gently, drawing down these hands and gazing inquiringly into the downcast face, — "Dan, my son, what is this they say about you? I cannot believe that you have done this thing."

The poor lad endeavored to avert his face, and still spoke nothing.

"Dan, look at me," continued Father Duffy, — "look me in the face and tell if it is true."

The sharp note of anguish in his tone went straight to Dan's heart; he raised his head obediently and looked at his ques-

tioner; the sorrow, the anxiety, worst of all the doubt in the latter's face piercing him like so many stabs.

"He thinks I done it!" he said to himself, and there leapt for a moment into his eyes so passionate a protest against the suspicion, that the priest's heart was filled with exultation and gratitude. These were, however, soon dispelled by Dan's words.

"What am I to tell you, yer riverence?" he said sharply and almost sullenly. "I see yez all think I done it."

"Tell me the truth, Dan. I only ask for the truth. What do you know about this terrible business?"

"Well, I'll tell ye, Father," said Dan, goaded into revealing as much as he dared. "Walkin' by, last night, I found him — him that 's dead — lyin' in the road with his head broke, an' kilt out and out. I seen him — yis I did — an' I seen he was dead an' I could do nothin' for him — an' — an' thin I come home, an' it upset me terrible, so it did, an' I did n't like to say anythin' about it."

He spoke lamely and hesitatingly, faltering between every word, and shifting his eyes uneasily from one side to the other.

"And why not? Why did you not speak?" said the priest, with the same acute sorrow in his tone.

"I thought it was n't my business," returned Dan. "I 've tould ye the thrute now, Father, but I s'pose no one will believe me."

He glanced up eagerly, if a little defiantly, and remarking the expression of the other, the eager, appealing glance came back into his eyes, the longing for self-justification to his heart. Father Duffy did not believe him, it was true enough; for he alone of all living men knew the motive which might have tempted Dan to such a deed, the very words he had once spoken rising up in accusation against him. "I dunno what I 'd do if Esther gave me up . . . I feel sometimes as if I could be the death of him."

All this, and Dan's manner on the pres-

ent occasion gave the lie to his words, and yet the kindly priest could not bring himself to believe him capable of *murder*.

"Dan," he said, and his deep voice vibrated with the energy of his appeal, "Dan, I command you as your priest — in the name of your God, to tell me the whole truth. You are keeping something from me. Down on your knees, lad — on your knees — and tell me all you know."

He pressed his hands on the lad's shoulders, and Dan, impelled by words and touch alike, sank on his knees at the feet of this strong, pitiful man and lifted up his voice — not, indeed, to speak, but to break into loud sobbing. Every fibre of his faithful, submissive nature was stirred; influences and associations honored from his earliest childhood pressed upon him with overwhelming force; it was positive torture to him "to go agin the priest." He could baffle his mother, and run the gauntlet of his friends' suspicious criticisms with a certain passive endurance, but to disobey Father Duffy, to

withhold from him that which *he* desired to know, almost broke his heart. And yet he was none the less determined to keep his secret inviolate. Not to relieve his mind, not to justify himself a thousand times over, would he suffer Peter's name to pass his lips.

He feared, not indeed that Father Duffy would reveal aught with which he might thus become acquainted, — that he knew to be impossible, — but that he might disapprove of the course he had resolved to pursue, and by the weight of his influence force him to abandon it.

So while the priest employed every persuasion and artifice to induce him to speak, Dan preserved an obstinate silence, though his distress was such as might have melted a heart of stone. Being an unsophisticated child of nature, he did not endeavor to check or disguise his emotion, but wept aloud, rocking himself to and fro on his knees almost as his mother might have done, while the tears trickled through his closed fingers and fell upon the ground.

At last a stir and bustle outside announced that the coroner had arrived, and Father Duffy knew that the moment for confession was past.

With a heavy heart he assisted Dan to rise, and wiped the tears from his eyes with that strange tenderness he had before shown him; taking up his stand close to him when he was led into the outer room, that he might at least by his presence assist and comfort him in the coming ordeal.

CHAPTER XVI.

TWO TRIBUNALS.

A MOTLEY crowd was already assembled in the chief room of the public-house, when Dan and his escort took up their position there, though two policemen were posted at the door to prevent the entrance of those whose presence was inconvenient or unnecessary. There was the "crowner," a personage of whom Dan stood almost as much in awe as though he had been the hangman himself; the twelve jurymen, all of whom were well known to him; and some half-dozen witnesses, including the gardener, and a couple of Dan's former fellow laborers from the White House.

He gazed round with those innocent, trustful blue eyes of his, which even now Father Duffy could not bring himself to believe were the eyes of a murderer. His

long black lashes were still wet with tears, and a sob broke now and then from between his parted lips, but there was a certain vague wondering curiosity amid all his terror that was touching in its suggestion of childlike simplicity.

His gaze wandered from one to the other of the jurymen; some of them farmers, others laborers like himself. He had never had cause either to fear them or to court their favor, but now they appeared to him in a new light, each as a judge vested with power over him for life or for death. All at once his glance fell on something lying within the half-open door that led into the bar — a long awful something, covered with a white sheet, at sight of which a shudder shook his whole frame, and he quickly averted his eyes. When he had somewhat recovered himself, he found that the first witness had been called, and was now under examination. This was the man who had discovered the body on his way to work at the farm adjoining the White House.

Dan listened steadily enough to his description of the appearance of the corpse, and did not shrink at his enumeration of the shocking details, though a groan of horror ran through the little assembly, and many of those present gazed on him as though he were a fiend incarnate. The sergeant of police deposed to the strangeness of his demeanor when arrested, to his apparent absence of surprise, and, after the first denial, avoidance of the disclaimers that might have been expected. He also mentioned the blood stain on Dan's nether garments, and the fact of his mother being in the act of endeavoring to remove it when he and his comrades appeared, which circumstance could not but be considered extremely damaging. The next witnesses were two of Dan's former companions at the White House, who, unwillingly enough, testified to the quarrel between him and Mr. Cassidy, the coroner extorting the admission that the prisoner had been the first to attack his late master.

A murmur almost like amusement ran through the company when Mrs. Green, more dead than alive, was hustled forward, and called upon to reveal what she knew.

For all her indignation against Dan, and incautious — not to say slanderous — remarks, nothing was further from her mind than to cause any real injury to the son of her old friend. A sort of yellow pallor had overspread her usually rubicund face, big beads of perspiration stood on her brow, and her evidence, already so confused and contradictory as to be sufficiently incomprehensible, was rendered yet more so by the extraordinary guttural sobs and prolonged wails with which she interspersed her narrative in token of distress.

Nevertheless, by a few pointed questions, a little judicious browbeating, a reference or two to the majesty and power of "the law" (which to persons of her class and condition appears in the light of a sort of ogre, the might of which is only equalled by its injustice), Mrs. Green was beguiled into

admissions that materially injured Dan's cause.

Things were beginning to look very black, as Father Duffy realized with sinking spirits; and indeed, when the gardener came forward, giving, in his calm, business-like way, telling evidence against him, the priest felt convinced that he ran a poor chance of escape.

Dan himself looked and listened with strained eyes and ears, and a sore heart.

"They're all goin' agin me — ivery wan!" he said to himself; and it seemed to him a strange and incomprehensible thing that, of all who were there assembled, whom he had known so long, and liked so well, not one should try to speak a good word for him. When the gardener, above all, under whose auspices he had worked for so many years, and with whom he had never exchanged a sharp word, came forward "to swear away his life," a burst of anger and indignation of a sudden filled his soul. He was too ignorant to understand anything about the

exigencies of justice, or the interests of the community at large. It only seemed to him, from his unsophisticated, unreasoning *Irish* point of view, that, were the cases reversed, he himself would have endured every ill rather than say a word to injure his fellow-man.

The examination of this last witness was still going on, when a sudden bustle and stir at the door attracted general attention, and a woman forced her way through the crowd almost to the coroner's side.

"Esther Daly!" ran from mouth to mouth, in a low, excited murmur.

Yes, Esther herself, white and haggard, with tearless eyes and a certain set determination in her face; her whole appearance denoting violent emotion.

"I 've come to spake!" she cried in a harsh voice that did not sound like hers. "I can tell yez more than any wan if ye 'll o'ny let me spake!"

At the first moment a great wave of wild, unutterable joy swept over Dan; Esther

had then found out the truth and was come to take his part. *She* knew he was innocent, *she* wished to save him — God bless her! Then a revulsion of feeling came — keen, overmastering, almost unendurable, in the fierceness of its pain, the depth of its despair. Was he to be powerless to save her after all? Was she, in spite of him, to compass her own and her brother's destruction, and to balk him of his sacrifice at the very moment of its completion?

"Esther!" he cried, his loud, agonized tones dominating the momentary confusion which succeeded her entrance. "Esther, darlint, I know what ye've come for, but for the love o' God, asthore, listen to me, an' don't let them git ye to spake."

"Ay, but I will spake!" interrupted Esther vehemently; her eyes literally blazed with fury; all the beauty and softness had gone out of her face, leaving it impressed with a sudden look of age, less painful to witness, however, than its dominant expression of fierce, almost diabolical hatred.

"Ye thought to put me off wid yer lyin' tales, did ye? Ha! but I 'll spake now — if I had to die far it — ye murtherer!"

When the sensation caused by this sudden outburst had somewhat subsided, the former witness was desired to stand aside for the present, and the new-comer — partly out of consideration for the overwhelming excitement under which she appeared to labor, and partly from the evident importance of her testimony — was examined in his stead.

"I 've come to spake agin him, an' to say *I know* he done the murther — that man there!" she cried, her loud, strident tones vibrating with eagerness, her extended arm trembling with passion. "It was him an' no one else done it, an' I 'll swear by the God that made me it was him. If anny wan desarves hangin' for that black job, it 's that man stannin' there" —

"Come, come, my girl," — the cool, business-like tones contrasting oddly with the vehemence of her denunciation, — "to the

point, if you please. Have you any reasons for saying this? What are your proofs?"

"Ay, I have raisons an' proofs too, if yez 'll give me time to tell them."

She paused for a moment, endeavoring to assume some degree of self-control, the constraint which she was putting on herself accentuating the passion it was meant to hide. "Him an' me was to have been man an' wife. I gev him me word o' that wanst, but I never liked him, an' afther a while I got shut of him. An' he knew — the fella knew" — raising hand and voice alike threateningly — "that the masther, Misther Cassidy, was afther me, an' going to marry me himself, an' make a lady of me."

At the sound of the buzz of astonishment and incredulity with which this speech was received she turned sharply round, white to the very lips, but fierce and unabashed still.

"It 's thrue, so it is — it 's God's thrute. He 'd have done it, if it had n't been for that murtherin' ruffian there."

"Do I understand you to say that the prisoner was aware of these relations between yourself and your master?"

"He did know, your honor, for he tould me so himself. An' says he, 'That 's what raly druv me to go fightin' the masther,' he says, 'ay, an' I 'd do it agin.' 'May be,' he says, 'ye 'll rue the day yit he larned ye to sarve me such a thrick.' An' it was the thrute, for he has me desthroyed as well as him. Ay, but I 'll rune him — I will" — here her voice which had risen almost to a shriek of anguish, suddenly dropped to a low, measured tone, terrible in its concentrated ferocity. "It was him alone that had a grudge agin' the masther, it was him alone that iver dared rise his hand to him, an' that was for why. An' if there 's justice in the counthry it 's him that ought to be hung. And sure as the Heaven 's above me, it 's the thrute I 'm telling ye, it 's him that desarves to be hung."

The silence which fell on all present as she ceased to speak, and looking defiantly

round seemed to challenge contradiction, was suddenly broken by the sound of a heavy fall. The prisoner, who had hearkened as if spell-bound to the evidence thus volunteered, his eyes fixed and glassy, his face unchanging in its expression of horror and despair, had suddenly dropped between the two policemen who stood beside him, and lay in a motionless heap on the ground.

"A little foxing — eh?" said one of the officials present. "No, by George!" — catching sight of the white face — "it 's real enough. This evidence has been too much for him; he knows he 's pretty well dished now."

"Stand back," said Father Duffy sternly, "give him air, if you please."

They fell back a little, watching curiously while the priest tore away Dan's collar and opened his shirt; then as he dashed water on his face and tried to force brandy between the closed lips, and still there appeared to be no signs of returning consciousness, one or two whispers of wonder and dismay were audible.

"I don't like his looks at all," said the coroner, drawing near, and bending over him.

"Nor do I," said Father Duffy, glancing up, very pale and calm. "It's my belief the man is dead."

Yes, it was true. Notwithstanding the amazement and incredulity with which the assertion was received, Father Duffy proved to be in the right. The parish doctor, hastily summoned, declared the fact to be beyond dispute; one of the strange tragedies, so terrible, so unaccountable, yet so far from infrequent in this uncertain world, had been enacted in their very midst. Whether Dan was carried off by some insidious malady, which, hitherto undreamt of, had been startled into sudden energy of growth by the suffering and strain he had of late undergone, or whether there be in truth such things as broken hearts, the fact remained the same — he was dead.

Father Duffy stood looking down on him with tears, which he made no attempt to

cheek, coursing slowly down his cheeks. This was the end of Dan — Dan, the pride of his parish, the tender, faithful support of the poor mother who even now was pouring forth her heart in prayers and tears for him — Dan, of whom the priest till this morning would have been ready to swear that he had never lost his baptismal innocence; here he lay, dead and dishonored, and not even he who yearned over him with such exceeding sorrow durst lift his voice in his defence.

Poor Dan! Hapless, innocent plotter! His plan had succeeded all too well; no human mind would ever fathom his motives, no earthly heart appreciate his devotion. His secret was to be forever inviolate, his sacrifice complete in its heroism and in its folly.

Esther had vanished no one knew whither, and one by one the onlookers melted away, some in tears, many crossing themselves and murmuring prayers; only a few officials remained, discussing such steps as were now to be taken.

"Well, it 's a judgment — a visible judgment!" remarked the coroner. "I never saw a more clear case of conscious guilt. It was being confronted with the girl that killed him!"

"Hush!" cried the priest almost fiercely. "Who are we that we should condemn him? Has he not passed beyond the reach of our faulty judgments to a higher Tribunal? Leave him to his God."






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